

animals&men

THE JOURNAL OF THE CENTRE FOR FORTEAN ZOOLOGY



Mongolia Expedition Report

Lake Morar Expedition; British Lynx; A new theory on the 'Starchild' skull; The Beast of Gren Drive; Ivorybill Woodpecker; news, reviews and more

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ISSUE 36

ANIMALS



MEN

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EDITORIAL

jonathan downes



Dear Friends,

Welcome to another issue of the world's only dedicated cryptozoological magazine. This issue has had somewhat of a chequered history, as we originally planned to have it out at the end of June - a month after Richard's return from Mongolia. However, the best laid plans of animals and men tend to go pear shaped on occasion, because on the 8th June I had a telephone call from my father. He had been taken seriously ill - an illness from which he will not recover, and he asked my advice. Having once upon a time worked in one of the 'caring professions', I was aghast at the thought that the old chap would have to live out his days in a Nursing Home, and after consultation with Graham and Richard, we decided that the only sensible thing for me to do would be to move into my old family home in North Devon for the duration of my father's illness.

Richard and Graham (God bless 'em) volunteered to come up and help me shoulder the twin burdens of looking after a terminally-ill old man, and trying to run the world's largest cryptozoological research organisation from his bedside. They have been working here on a shift system, and a few weeks later we were joined by Mark North, who being between jobs was happy to move in here on a semi-permanent basis. I must be a better nurse than I realised, because we managed to pull my Dad out of the terminal spiral in which he was languishing, and whilst he is still not going to get better, he is not in any imminent danger of dying (although in his frail state, one should expect the worst at all times). After a difficult month or so, the CFZ office is mostly entrenched out here in rural bliss, and I have managed to achieve my ambition of the last 20 years, and moved out of my grotty little estate in Exeter.

I have never made any secret of the fact that I have intended to start a proper Visitor's Centre for the CFZ in a rural location, and things being equal, the CFZ has finally found a permanent home where - over the next months and years - we will have a proper

museum and library, and become a proper resource centre for researchers worldwide.

I am sad to say that we are having to raise subscription rates with this issue. When we first started at £10 a year, the magazine was only 48 pages long, and since then we have added 12 pages and there have been two rises in postage rates. We hope that you will not be put off by the increased membership dues, and will continue to support us.

We are also considering a change of format. If there is enough support for the idea, we are thinking of publishing three *perfect bound* issues of 80 pages a year. The production values (which have - we believe - got better in recent years (most notably with a complete graphic overhaul in this issue), will continue to rise, and the logistical problems surrounding printing will be much alleviated. Let us know what you think. The idea is not set in stone by any means, but as membership numbers increase (we are now approaching the 500 mark), it seems like a sensible move.

I am also pleased to announce that another of my covert projects appears to be bearing fruit. Five years ago, the CFZ was seen as somewhat of an unruly 'Boy's Club' run by (as Joe Strummer would have put it) *The Last Gang in Town*. Only 7% of our members were women, and I had a sneaking suspicion that the fairer sex were somewhat put off by the laddish image of the CFZ, which appeared to be full of middle-aged men with wild staring eyes who drank too much. Well, the aforementioned blokes are still here, but it seems we must be doing *something* right, because now 37% of our members are women, and the number continues to rise! We have also acquired a pet magpie called 'Keith' (don't ask why), and the future looks brighter than it did six months ago.

Onwards and Upwards,
Slainte Mhor

Jon Downes (Director, CFZ)

THE FACULTY OF THE CENTRE FOR FORTEAN ZOOLOGY



"In her abnormalities, nature reveals her secrets." (Goethe)

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NEWSFILE

Edited and compiled by **Jonathan Downes** and **Mark North**



NEW AND REDISCOVERED

An unidentified canid which does not appear to correspond to any of the seven canid species known to occur in the region, was photographed in the Danakil Desert of Eritrea, in December 2002. This remote and inhospitable area, referred to as Devil's Kitchen, has not been visited by many outsiders during the last 30 years due to warfare and security concerns, which may explain why this canid has not been reported previously.

The specimen, seemingly a female in regular body condition, was sighted in the afternoon walking 35-40m from the observer's vehicle. It had a greyish coat, thin long tail, long legs, and extremely large ears. The observed animal does not belong to either three desert fox

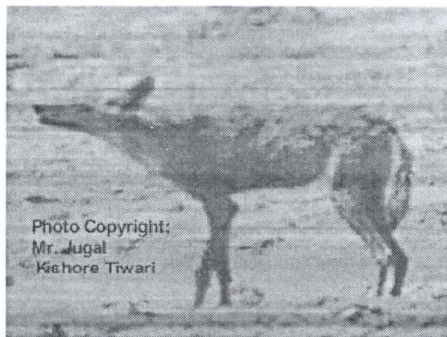


Photo Copyright:
Mr. Jugal
Kishore Tiwari

species or the bat-eared fox, the canid species expected in this region. Locals complain about loss of sheep and goats to predation by a canid species. It has been suggested that this is a new species of desert wolf.

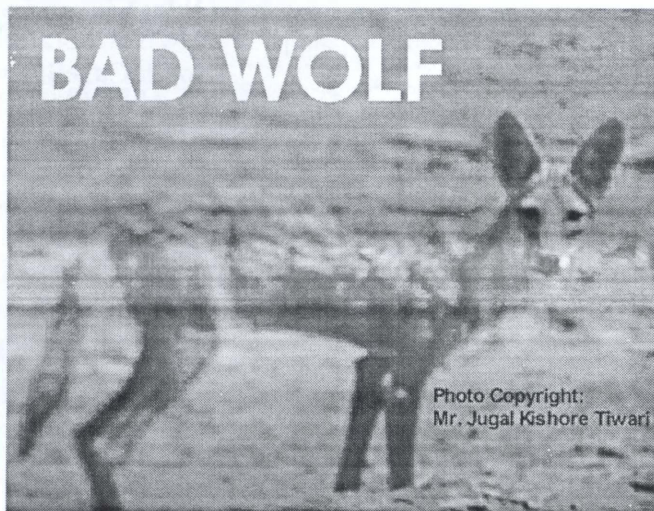


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Mr. Jugal Kishore Tiwari

CATFISH CAPERS

A team of researchers from Mexico and the United States has identified a new family of catfish in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. The paper detailing the discovery has been published in *Zootaxa*, an online scientific journal.

They've named the new family *Lacantuniidae* and named the species *Lacantunia enigmatica*. It becomes the 37th family of catfishes, a diverse group of fish found around the world.

Discovery of new families of living vertebrates is rare; in ichthyology there have been just two new families discovered in the past 60 years: the coelacanth in 1938 and the megamouth shark in 1983.

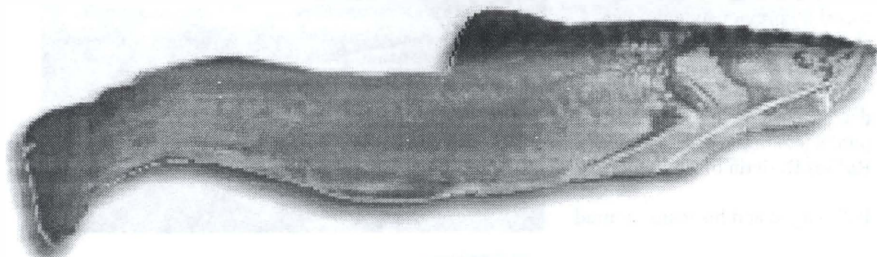
The researchers are Dr. Rocio Rodiles-Hernandez of the Colegio de la Frontera Sur, Dr. Dean Hendrickson and Dr. Julian Humphries of the University of Texas at Austin and Dr. John Lundberg of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

The fish's skeleton was scanned by high-resolution computer tomographic equipment at The University of Texas at Austin.

"To most people it's just a catfish, and externally it looks a lot like an ictalurid, the family to which all North American freshwater catfishes belong," Hendrickson said. *"But once we got into the skeleton, we started seeing all these weird things."*

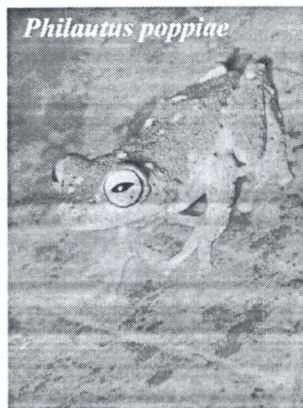
The barbels are articulated differently from that of an ictalurid. There also are differences in the bone structure of the skull and in the shape of the air bladder.

"The ictalurids all have these big jaw muscles that come up over the top and anchor on top of the head," Hendrickson said. *"This has a very narrow cranium and the muscles anchor to the sides of the bone instead of coming up on top. That and a number of other characters clearly indicate it has nothing to do with ictalurids."*



THOSE CRAZY FROGS

comparing what they found with Sri Lankan wildlife collected earlier and preserved in museums in London, Paris and Berlin.



Philautus poppiae

Researchers confirmed the discovery of 35 new frog species in Sri Lanka's dwindling rain forest over the past decade, but also found that 17 frog species have disappeared and 11 others face imminent extinction unless their habitat is

protected.

A concerted effort from the government and international agencies is needed to preserve the frogs' rain forest home, warned researcher Rohan Pethiyagoda, *"or it's not going to be only the frogs that will be in trouble."*

Pethiyagoda and his team also found 50 previously unknown species of snails, 17 new crabs, seven new lizards, and a mysterious new species of mouse deer, according to their study published in the peer-reviewed Raffles Bulletin of Zoology.

Pethiyagoda and his team scoured

They found that 17 frog species previously found no longer existed in the wild.

"Sri Lanka's frogs are in deep trouble ... It's a desperate situation,"

Pethiyagoda said in a telephone interview with the Associated Press, adding that captive breeding may be necessary to save 11 species on the brink of extinction.

The 35 new frog species boosts Sri Lanka's frog diversity to 105 — including the 17 now extinct — and an additional 35 are in the process of being classified, Pethiyagoda said.

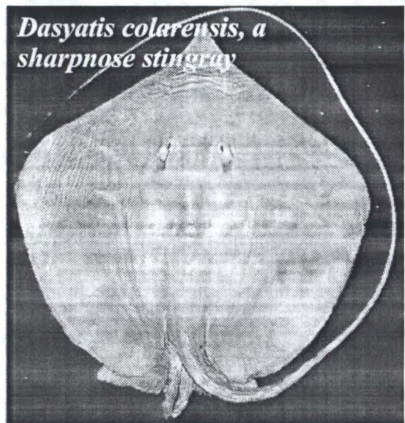
Sri Lanka is home to 3 percent of the world's frogs, he added.



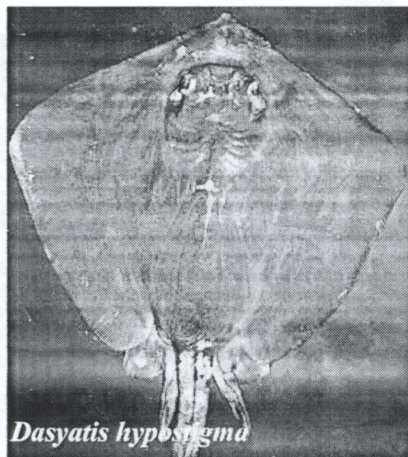
Philautus asankai

NEW SPECIES ROUNDUP

Dasyatis colarensis, a sharpnose stingray



Two new stingrays from Brazil



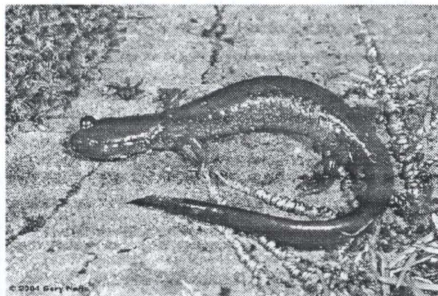
Dasyatis hypostigma

Little information is available on these fish; they are both marine, and *Dasyatis hypostigma* was until recently confused with the closely related species *D. say*

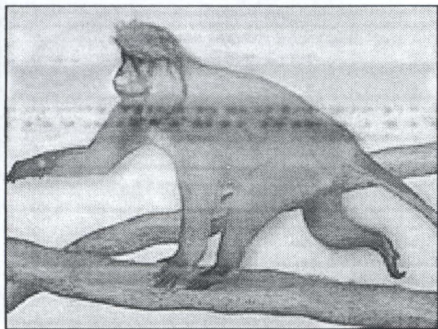
* A new species of salamander has been identified in the Siskiyou Mountains of southern Oregon and Northern California, demonstrating the biological richness of the region, researchers say.

The Scott Bar salamander, classified as *Plethodon asupak*, had been considered to be a member of the Siskiyou Mountains salamander species, or *Plethodon stormi*, until genetic analysis showed a distinct evolutionary line, said Joseph Vaile of the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center in Ashland.

"Everyone talks about how biologically rich the tropics are, but we are still discovering species right here in the Klamath-Siskiyou," Vaile said.



* A previously unknown arboreal monkey species - the highland mangabey - has been found in the mountains of southern Tanzania. The animal is believed to be critically endangered.



NEW SPECIES ROUNDUP

* What appears to be a new species of fox has been photographed in Borneo. The animal - which was caught on an automatic infra-red camera, set up in the forest of the Kayam Menterong National Park - is foxy red all over, with no white markings, and a bushy tail. It has slightly extended back legs, suggesting that it may spend part of its time up trees.

* Is it a squirrel, a rat, a guinea pig? Maybe a chinchilla? The long-whiskered rodent with stubby legs and a tail covered with dense hair resembles them all but has turned out to be a previously unknown species that actually represents an entire new family of wildlife, the Wildlife Conservation Society said.

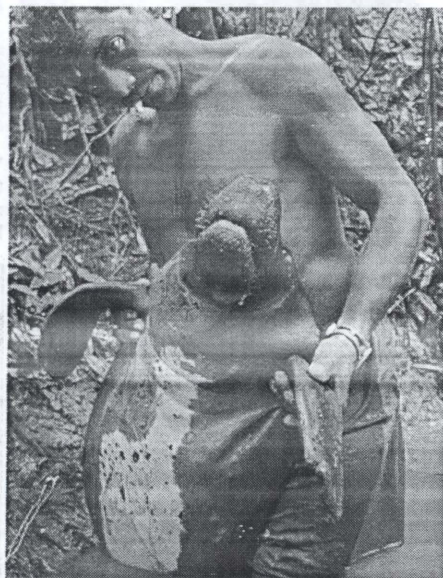
The kha-nyou, as local people call it, was discovered by a team of scientists in a hunter's market in central Laos. *"It was for sale on a table next to some vegetables. I knew immediately it was something I had never seen before,"* said Robert Timmins, a WCS researcher. Another colleague, Mark Robinson, later discovered other specimens caught by hunters, and also identified bone fragments in an owl pellet. Based on morphological differences in the skull and bone structure, coupled with DNA analysis, it was estimated that the animal diverged from other rodents millions of years ago. *"To find something so distinct in this day and age is just extraordinary. For all we know, this could be the last*



* Chinese scientists exploring a natural reserve in the province of Shaanxi have claimed to have discovered two previously unknown species of Panda. Unlike the usual black and white checkered Panda bears, their fur is either gray or white. No information about the number of animals was given, and no further details were available as we went to press.

* It has been claimed on the 'Extinction Forums' at <http://extinctanimals.proboards22.com/index.cgi> that Dr. Marc van Roosmalen and another scientist from Germany have discovered a new subspecies of the Amazon river manatee in 2003.

It is a dwarf animal which has a size of 1.30m (4.33 ft) and a weight of about 60kg. No further details have been published but this photograph has been released. Watch this space for more details.



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In the greatest bit of cryptozoological news in living memory, the spectacular ivory-billed woodpecker, which was declared extinct in 1920, has been found alive in North America.

The news has stunned ornithologists worldwide.

with some comparing the discovery to finding the dodo. This is manifestly stupid, as the dodo is a flightless bird the size of a turkey which has been extinct for half a millenium, whereas the Ivorybill is much smaller and can fly, making it far more elusive, but the news is nevertheless outstanding.

"This find is so significant that it is really difficult to describe," Alistair Gammell of the Royal Society of the Protection of Birds (RSPB) told BBC News. *"We sadly won't rediscover the dodo, but it is almost on that level."*

Frank Gill of the National Audubon Society added: *"This is huge. just huge. It is kind of like finding Elvis"* The "stunning" red, white and black woodpecker was formerly distributed across the south-eastern United States and Cuba. The bird carves out a narrow ecological niche for itself by drilling in mature trees, and logging and forest clearance for agriculture began to impinge on its environment.

By 1920 it was assumed extinct, although there was one more confirmed sighting in North America of a lonely unpaired female, above the remnants of an over-cut forest. Since then, decades of searches yielded nothing and hope gradually faded away. Now, finally, the bird has been seen again in the Big Woods of eastern Arkansas.

GOTCHA!

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This grainy still from a shaky video provides conclusive proof that the ivorybill still lives

The discovery was first made on 11 February 2004 by Gene Sparling of Hot Springs, Arkansas, who was kayaking in a reserve in Big Woods. He saw an unusually large red-crested woodpecker fly towards him and land on a nearby tree. He said the creature did not look quite like anything he had seen before, so he contacted Cornell University's *Living Bird* magazine. After a team of experts interviewed him, they felt they might be onto something special.

John Fitzpatrick, of Cornell University in the US, headed the search party, which included Tim Gallagher, editor of *Living Bird*. Within a month, Dr Gallagher had seen the ivory-billed woodpecker for himself.

Describing the moment he first set eyes on it, he said: "Just to think this bird made it into the 21st Century gives me chills. It's like a funeral shroud has been pulled back, giving us a glimpse

of a living bird, rising Lazarus-like from the grave."

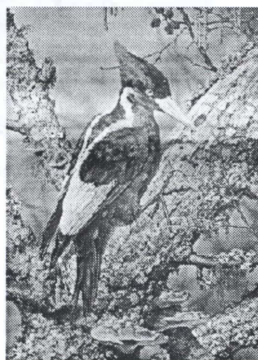
The team finally went on to capture the bird on video, which allowed them to confirm its identity.

Among the world's largest woodpeckers, the ivory-bill is one of six North American bird species suspected or known to have gone extinct since 1880.

"This provides hope for [other] species classified as potentially extinct," said Stuart Butchart of BirdLife International. "It also offers an extra incentive to protect the habit of the ivory-bill, as well as other birds.

Amazingly America may have another chance to protect the future of this spectacular bird and the awesome forests in which it lives."

Mr Fitzpatrick said. "It is the most beautiful bird we could imagine rediscovering. It is a magical bird. For those of us who tenaciously cling to the idea that man can live alongside fellow species, this is the most incredible ray of



NEW DOLPHIN

Two north Queensland researchers have identified a new species of dolphin in Australian waters.

The Australian snubfin dolphin lives in shallow coastal waters in northern Australia and possibly Papua New Guinea.

It initially was thought to have been an irrawaddy dolphin, usually found in Asia and Australia. But researcher Isabel Beasley, a PhD student from Townsville's James Cook University, says DNA samples and skull measurements have proved otherwise.

"The Australian snubfin has three colours, whereas the Asian dolphin has just uniform slate grey colour with a white belly," she said.

"The other differences are in the dorsal fin height and flipper shapes. Also within the skulls, there's a lot of differences in the skulls."

It is the first discovery of a new dolphin species in more than 50 years. Ms Beasley says the snubfin has a smaller fin compared with most other species. The species is often confused with a dugong.

"The way that its forehead is shaped, it's very rounded and many people do confuse the two," Ms Beasley said. "But it is that small little dorsal fin on the back of its body [is] how you can distinguish it."

She says it is a very shy dolphin, tending to keep away from boats, unlike more showy bottlenose and other species of dolphin. Ms Beasley has been studying the Asian irrawaddy dolphin since 1996.

UNDERSEA DISCOVERIES

At least 12 new species of sea creatures have been found by an international team of researchers trawling the ocean's depths off the Philippines, a Singaporean trio of experts announced.

Many more species not seen in decades turned up from the several hundred prawns, crabs, lobsters and fish dredged from depths of 100m to 2 300m in the Bohol and Sulu seas, off the island of Panglao.

"The expedition has given us a complete picture of the marine biodiversity of the area," associate professor Peter Ng, director of the Raffles museum of biodiversity research at the National University of Singapore (NUS), told *The Straits Times*.

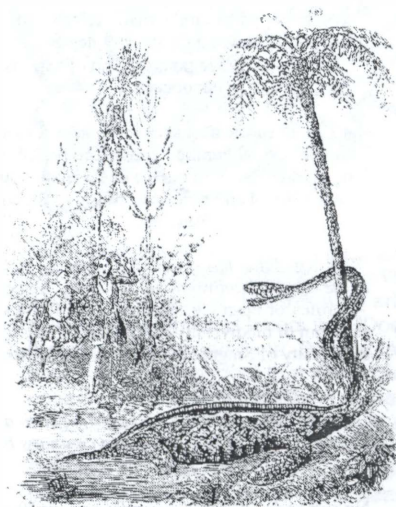
"This is the first time we're getting such a detailed archive, with some of the creatures being photographed live for the first time."

Ng and about 20 other researchers spent 10 days sieving through tons of mud hauled up in a net. The biggest problems were the large rocks and debris on the seabed, which broke the wooden beams in front of the nets on five occasions.

"Most of the creatures we found this time are very different from those from (an) earlier trip, even though we were virtually next door to where we were before, only deeper," Ng noted.

The researchers from Singapore were part of another international team, which found 1 200 kinds of prawns, crabs and lobsters, several dozen of which were new species, last year in the same area.

LAKE AND SEA MONSTERS



...But is she bald?

Tessie, the monster of Lake Tahoe, California, has made another appearance.

Beth Douglas, of Sacramento, thought Tessie sightings happen everyday in Tahoe which is why she didn't blink at her friend Ron Talmage's reaction in mid April to a dark shape undulating at the lake's surface about 100 yards off Tahoe Park Beach. *"Does that*

look solid to you?"

Talmage, of Rocklin, Calif., said to Douglas. When Douglas replied that the shape - with three to five humps along its back - did look solid, Talmage flatly said *"Damn. that's Tessie."*

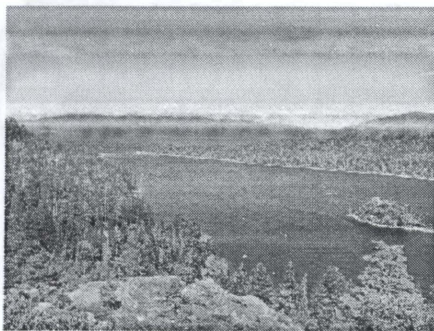
"It was so cool," Douglas added. *"The way he said it was so calm, I thought it [Tessie sighting] was an everyday occurrence."*

Douglas and Talmage day tripped to Tahoe to fish at Boca Reservoir and check up on two West Shore cabins owned by Talmage's mother.

They stopped by Tahoe Park Beach to take in views of the lake, which had calm waters early that afternoon. *"There were these solid, black humps,"* Talmage said, using his hands in an undulating motion while describing Tessie in the Tahoe World office Friday. *"There was no wake as it came toward us."*

What Talmage and Douglas described was the subject of a talk - "USOs: Unidentified Swimming Objects" - in January 2004 by Dr. Charles Goldman of the U. C. Davis Tahoe Research Group. At that lecture, sponsored by the Squaw Valley Institute, Goldman spoke of a conference he held 20 years ago at the University of Nevada, Reno on the subject of USOs.

A number of scientists there testified they had

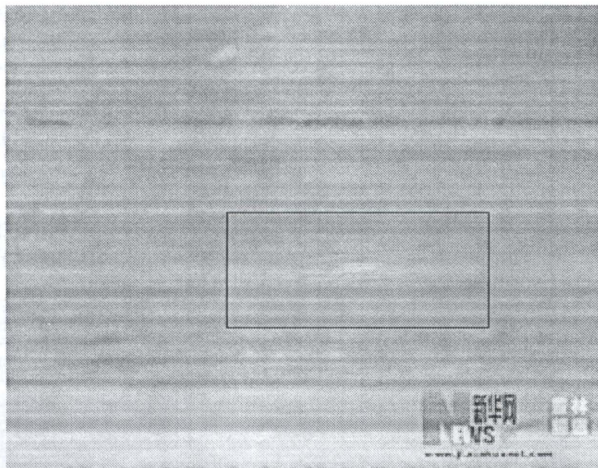


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seen Tahoe Tessie. If Tessie sightings have one thing in common, said Goldman - no one ever sees the head or tail, only dark objects in the water.

To illustrate his point, Goldman decided to conduct a number of experiments. He created a photo of "Tessie" by capturing the splash from rocks thrown in the water.

Another photo he uses shows what looks like a series of humps in the lake, which in reality are only waves.



EEL MEAT AGAIN

The operators of a trout farm are offering a \$1000 reward to anyone who catches Melbourne's latest monster. A giant eel, believed to be around four metres long with a head the size of a football has been spotted at the trout farm at Warburton.

It is believed the eel washed into the farm's ponds during recent record breaking storms.

Farm manager Gary Wales says efforts to catch the giant creature have so far been unsuccessful.

"We don't want it harmed, this things probably 30-years-old, and he's come here probably by mistake and he's found himself a good little home and plenty of food," he said. "We hope to catch him alive and take him to the Melbourne Aquarium."

He says he has never heard of such a large eel before.

CHINESE ROCKS

A local tourist claims to have seen and videotaped the Tianchi Lake monster in the Changbai Mountain, in Jilin Province, the Chinese news agency Xinhua reported yesterday.

The Tianchi Lake monster in the Changbai Mountain was allegedly sighted and videotaped by a local tourist.

52-year-old Zheng Changchun and his daughter and son-in-law were standing enjoying the scenery in the western side of the mountain. Suddenly, towards the middle of the lake, Zheng saw a strange, black object emerging from the water and disturbing the calm surface.

"I was so excited and shouted loudly that there was a monster in the lake," said Zheng. "All the tourists by the lake stared at it."

Kcen video buff Zheng grabbed his family e three times, each time lasting just a few seconds,

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camcorder and managed to get the whole sighting on film, until whatever it is in the lake vanished beneath the water. His son-in-law also took some pictures with his zoom lens.

Zheng said that when they climbed to the top of the mountain above Lake Tianchi at about 10 am, it was covered with thick fog that suddenly gave way to bright sunshine. The water emerged as clear as a mirror, ideal for photography. Zheng's film lasts almost a minute, and in it a black object can be seen emerging from the water in the same place three times, each time lasting just a few seconds, before it finally vanishes and does not reappear.

"We were more than 1,000 metres away so it's

difficult, but I would say what we saw above water was about the size of the head of an adult ox," Zheng was quoted as saying.

"But I did notice that every time it was above water, there were huge ripples in the water, suggesting the rest of it was enormous."

CHINESE WHISPERS

"Look! Monsters!" A group of Beijing tourists cried in astonishment. The news claiming reappearance of "lake monsters" immediately



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spread throughout the region. "Lake monsters" resurfaced.

On the afternoon of June 7, (around 7:50 pm, Beijing time), seven tourists from Beijing were sailing on the Kanas Lake, a scenic spot in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, northwest China. When they stopped near Sandaowan for a photo, they suddenly spotted two dark objects, very large in size, springing out of the water, breaking a wave one meter high. They leapt forward one following the other, headed swiftly towards the middle of the lake and disappeared from sight in about two minutes. Then peace reigned again.

Each of the "monsters" looked about 10 meters long, said the seven Beijing tourists, who were the only witnesses to this bizarre encounter. They responded quickly by raising up their video camera on hand, and now local authorities are talking with them for a duplication of their tape. Whether the two objects are legendary "lake monsters" requires further investigation.

"Monsters" thought to be giant fish

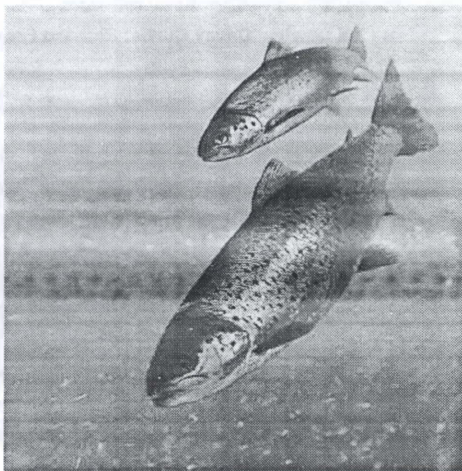
Kanas Lake, meaning a "beautiful and mysterious lake" in Mongolian language, is located at the Kanas Nature Reserve in Altai mountain area of north Xinjiang. As China's largest alpine lake, it is famous for its beautiful scenery and primitive ecosystem.

In 1985, Xinjiang Daily carried a headline announcing discovery of giant Red Fish in the lake, saying they were 10 to 15 meters long, weighing more than 4 tons and each having a head over one meter wide. Since then, domestic and foreign reports on the mysterious creatures have never ceased and investigation teams came, one after another.

The "lake monster" is thought to be giant taimen. In 1987, a well-equipped scientific research team formed by local and domestic experts discovered a sizable school of Giant Red Fish, each of them three or four meters long. The team thus announced that the mystery was solved - the "lake monsters" were giant taimen, called Giant Red Fish locally. After that, the investigation team published a book on its survey, but until now people still know little about this kind of giant fish.

Further investigation scheduled

For those bulls, horses and sheep disappeared along the lake, were they really swallowed up by the "monsters"? An answer may come up in the coming September, when scientists, divers, cameramen and experts on environment and tourism gather here to launch a full-scale exploration. The ten-day activity, for which related plans have been drawn, is another attempt to solve this century-old mystery.



creature feature

THE CFZ INVESTIGATES

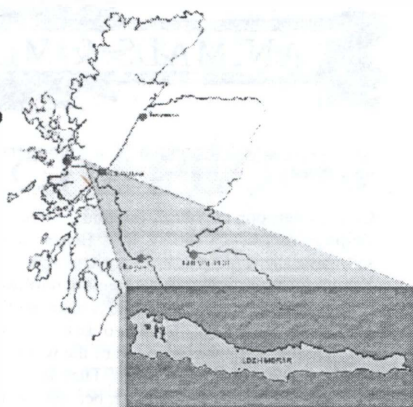


Most people are familiar with the idea of a monster in Loch Ness, but many other Scottish lochs play host to unknown animals as well. After Loch Ness, Loch Morar is the best known.

Morar is Europe's deepest lake at 1000 feet, beating its better-known rival by 200 feet. Unlike the peat-stained waters of Loch Ness, Morar's waters are very clear. Morar never freezes and despite being a deep-sided glacial lake its waters comparatively productive.

Its resident monsters have been named Morag, a derivative of the Gaelic morthobhar meaning big water. In centuries past it was believed Morag would only show itself if a member of a certain Scottish clans was about to die. Morag could appear as a fair maiden or a great serpent. The bests did not gain much notice in the outside world until the 20th century.

The most dramatic encounter took place on August 16th 1969. Duncan McDonnell and William Simpson were returning from a trip up



the loch. It was around 9.00 pm but still light. McDonnell was at the wheel and the boat was doing seven knots. He writes...

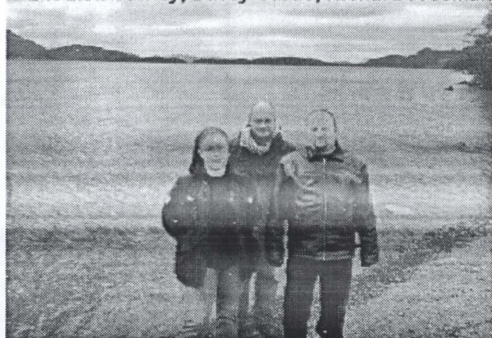
"I heard a splash or disturbance in the water astern of us. I looked up and saw about twenty yards behind us this creature coming directly after us in our wake. It only took a matter of seconds to catch up with us. It grazed the side of the boat, I am quite certain this was

unintentional. When it struck the boat seemed to come to a halt or at least slow down. I grabbed the oar and was attempting to fend it off, my one fear being that if it got under the boat it might capsize it."

Simpson wrote...

"As we were sailing down the loch in my boat we were suddenly disturbed and frightened by a thing that surfaced behind us. We watched it catch us up then bump into the side of the boat, the impact sent a kettle of water I was heating onto the floor. I ran into the cabin to turn the gas off as the water

L-R Lisa Dowley; Davey Curtis; Richard Freeman



LOCH MORAR EXPEDITION

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had put the flame out. Then I came out of the cabin to see my mate trying to fend the beast off with an oar, to me he was wasting his time. Then when I seen the oar break I grabbed my rifle and quickly putting a bullet in it fired in the direction of the beast.. The I watched it slowly sink away from the boat and that was the last I seed of it."

Neither of the men seemed to think the bullet had any effect on the monster. They estimated it to be 9 meters (30 feet). The skin was rough and dirty brown in colour. It had three humps that protruded 18 inches out of the water. McDonell thought they may have been undulations rather than humps. McDonell reported seeing a snake like head a foot across held 18 inches out of the water.

John MacVarish, barman at the Morar Hotel, had a sighting on August 27 1968. *"I saw this thing coming. I thought it was a man standing in a boat but as it got nearer I saw it was something coming out of the water. I tried to get up close to it with the outboard out of the water and what I saw was a long neck five or six feet out of the water with a small head on it, dark in colour, coming quite slowly down the loch. When I got to about 300 yards of it, it turned off into the deep and just settled down slowly into the loch out of sight. The neck was about one and a half feet in diameter and tapered up to between ten inches and a foot. I never saw any features, no eyes or*

anything like that. It was a snake like head, very small compared to the size of the neck - flattish, a flat type of head. It seemed to have very smooth skin but at 300 yards it's difficult to tell. It was very dark, nearly black. It was 10am, dead calm, no wind, brilliant sunshine. I saw it for about ten minuets travlling very slowly: it didn't alter its angle to the water. It looked as if it was paddling itself along. There was very little movement from the water, just a small streak from the neck. I couldn't really see what was propelling it but I think it was something at the sides rather than behind it."

David Curtis, the Centre for Fortean Zoology's Sunderland representative, kindly financed a fact-finding trip to Loch Morar in April of this year. Accompanying him was Lisa Dowley, a new lady in the CFZ, and myself. Our aim was to test out bait holding floatation devices I had designed.

We stopped at a lovely hunting lodge built in 1840 called Garramore House. It was used to train spies in WW2. Its current proprietor, Julia Moore was a fascinating lady who knew my favorite author, Mervyn Peake. She told us of a sighting that has never been recorded before and was unknown outside the village.

Apparently two youths from Yorkshire were on a fishing holiday about four years ago. They were out on a boat, one keeping watch, the other operating the tiller. The lad on watch shouted out rate. Both saw what looked like a tree trunk



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that there was a "tree" approaching the boat at an alarming rate. Both saw what looked like a tree trunk racing towards the boat. They feared a collision but at the last moment the "trunk" arched up and dove down into the depths. The pair maid the bank in record time, packed their tent and returned home on the same day.

Sadly, we could not get out onto the loch as we could not get in contact with the only local man who hires boats. The water also became very choppy. Julia had warned us about going out on the water in inclement conditions. Just last year a young man had done just that and had disappeared. His upturned boat was found adrift. Despite police searches with divers and heat detecting devices the body was never found. In cold lakes decay in bodies is slowed by the low temperature. Ergo gases do not build up to buoy the body to the surface. The unfortunate man's body may have sunk down to the bottom. On the other hand something else could have happened to it.

We were surprised at the amount of dead sheep washed down from the surrounding mountains and ending up in the loch. They would make a good additional food source for a big predator in the loch.

We used nylon rope with empty plastic milk bottles as floatation devices. We tied one end to a tree or rock. We then laced another length to the bottle connecting the two lengths. At the end of the second length, 20 feet or so beneath the float was the bait. This was a mixture of mussels, fish guts, herring, cow liver and Van Den Eynd Predator Plus, a fish-attracting chemical. The mixture was placed in Hessian sacks so that it could permeate through.

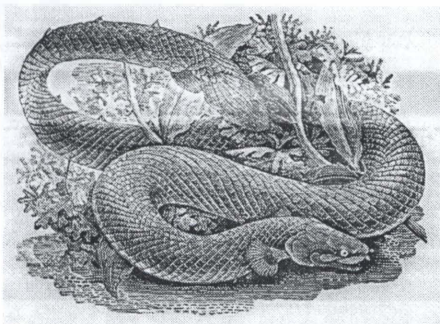
(Sadly, nothing touched the bait, but the floatation devices worked a treat. We suspect that it may have been too early in the year and the creatures may have been torpid. Most sightings have been in warm

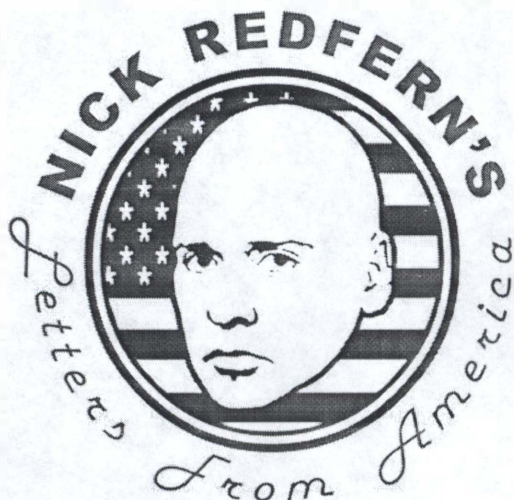
weather and calm conditions.

So what is Morag? As with the Nessie I think the best bet are giant sterile eels. The common eels swims out to the Sargasso Sea to breed then die. The baby eels follow scent trails back to their ancestral fresh waters homes and the cycle begins again.

Sometimes, however a mutation occurs and the eel is sterile. These stay in fresh water and keep on growing. Known as eunuch eels no one knows how old they get or how big. In February 2004 two Canadian tourists came upon a 25-foot eel floating in the shallows of Loch Ness. At first they thought it was dead but when it began to move they beat a hasty retreat. In the 1980s a 20-foot eel was reported in the Birmingham Ship Canal. Another 20 foot eel was supposedly caught in the cooling system in some aluminum works in Dorset in the 1990s.

One theory suggests that these rare, naturally occurring, mutations may now be on the increase due to pollution. PCBs and Beta Blocker chemicals have long been implicated in causing sterility in fish. Could they be causing more eunuch eels in the deep lakes of Scotland? For now we just don't know but David, Lisa, and I are planning a return trip later in the year to try and find out more.





Nick Redfern's Letter From America

Bigfoot, Goatman, and Ghost Lights

Saturday July 9 marked the 36th anniversary of what was probably the largest monster hunt in the history of Texas. On that day in 1969, two couples parked near Lake Worth claimed that a "scaly goat-man" had jumped out of a tree and onto the roof of their car, causing them (not unnaturally!) to race to the local police station.

The next night, after an article on the curious encounter had appeared in the local newspaper, no less than 30 people were out roaming the area, hoping to catch a glimpse of the creature – and a number reportedly did see it.

According to a variety of witnesses, a 7-foot tall, several hundred pound, white ape-like

creature threw a tyre at the crowd, which included police officers; and within days, a fuzzy photo of the alleged monster surfaced.

Inevitably, theories abounded: some suggested that the presence of the creature was prime evidence that Bigfoot really did exist. That hoary old chestnut about escaped circus apes did the rounds, as did the allegation that the entire event was a practical joke undertaken by teenagers from the nearby Brewer High School.

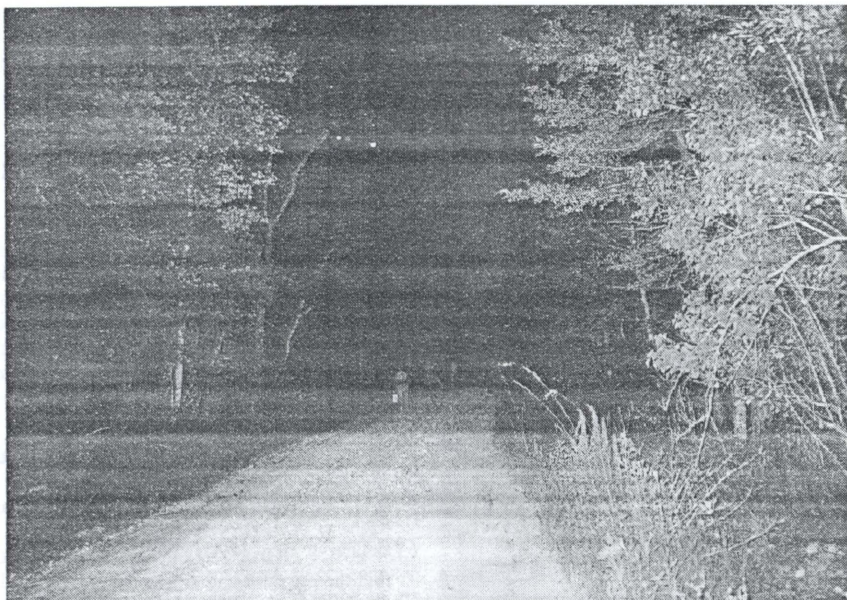
But the controversy continued unabated: indeed, one of the strangest reports came from a man who was sleeping in his truck by the lake, and claimed

that the creature had stolen his bag of fried chicken, stuffed the tasty meal in its mouth, and swam out across the lake!

Eventually the weird events at Lake Worth became the subject of a book written by Sallie Ann Clark; however, no recent sightings have surfaced and renowned Texas-based cryptozoologist Chester Moore travelled to the area a few years ago and concluded that the habitat was no longer suitable to allow such a creature to survive.

Nevertheless, Ken Gerhard – author of the excellent *Monsters Are Real!* – and me are planning on launching a new weekend-long expedition of the area very shortly in an effort to determine if more can be learned about the saga of the Goat-Man. I'll keep you informed how things develop.

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On a slightly related matter, I recently lectured (along with Bigfoot researcher Rob Riggs, and Paul Devereux) in Austin, Texas at a conference on the subject of so-called “Ghost Lights” such as the famous Marfa Lights.

After the conference, me, Rob, Paul and several other people in attendance at the conference headed to Texas’s Big Thicket, a huge area of forest in South Texas that has been the site of numerous Bigfoot style encounters as well as Ghost Light sightings – and, indeed, often at the same time, which has led some commentators – such as Rob Riggs – to suggest that the two phenomena are directly linked.

An overnight stay in the woods was immensely profitable: I succeeded in capturing on film one of the curious Ghost Lights and that can be seen at the top of the trees in this particular picture. The Light moved slowly and winked out only seconds after I secured the photograph.

As with the search for the Goatman, I will be preparing an in-depth report on the excursion to the Big Thicket for a future issue and will be lecturing on the subject of Bigfoot in Texas for your esteemed editor’s Weird Weekend later this month.

BIGFOOT NOTEBOOK

Paul Vella



Forum News

It has been a while since the last round-up, and a lot has happened since then most significantly, I rather naively, took on the challenge of administrating the world's largest Bigfoot related Internet forum at www.bigfootforums.com.

The forum was set up in 2002 by Minnesota resident Brian Brown to allow him to talk about Bigfoot with interested people because his wife wouldn't discuss it with him he never expected the forum to grow, but grow it did, receiving more than half a million page hits every month, and includes participants of great standing such as John Green, Rick Noll and Daniel Perez.

Brian has recently decided to scale back his involvement in the forum due to pressing business commitments, so I agreed to step in and keep things ticking over until he is ready to step back into the mix. Keeping the peace on a forum full of independent thinkers is a lot harder than you would imagine....

Orang-utan Fund

As you know, the Orang-utan is facing extinction Bigfootforums.com has set up a fighting fund with the aim of raising \$560 by December 31st 2005 enough to pay for The Orangutan Foundation International to provide guards to patrol the Tanjung Puting National Park against poachers and illegal loggers for just one day. Anyone interested in donating can contact me directly, or send a donation via Paypal to orangutan@bigfootresearch.com

All is not well with Kal Korff, Greg Long & Bob Heironimus

You will recall my article a few issues ago where I highlighted the major problems with Greg Long's book, and many of you will have read Kal Korff's article a couple of months ago in Fortean

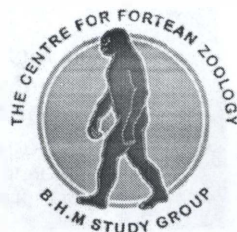
Times, which included stills from the reconstruction of the Patterson-Gimlin Film staged for the benefit of National Geographic Channel.

A few days after the publication of Korff's article, which had sung the praises of Greg Long's book, I received word that Korff had ceased contact with Greg Long! Interesting, at the same time, both Korff's and Long's websites were closed down, and at the time of writing, they are still down. I suspect that this is a dispute over money, with Korff planning to use Long's book to promote his documentary. We hear that Bob Heironimus has sided with Korff and TV producer Kiviat, and that they are still planning a reconstruction using the rather silly suit manufactured by costume maker Philip Morris.

Greg Long contacted me shortly afterward, and amongst other things, told me that Korff had never listened to any of his interview tapes, which is completely contrary to what Korff told us at UnCon in 2003, where he claimed to have been involved in the process of 'deposing' witnesses for the book. Make of that what you will.

New Movie

Independent film company Flickerscope has finally found a distributor for its low-budget movie 'Primeval' that Sony are distributing on DVD as 'Sasquatch Hunters', and marketed as a sequel to the awful



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Lance Hendrikson movie 'Sasquatch' (aka The Untold). The two movies have nothing whatsoever to do with each other, however.

The movie is a fairly typical low-budget 'pick 'em off one at a time' movie, with an obligatory (but all too brief) scene of a scantily clad blonde.

Video sighting in Manitoba, Canada.

The frozen north of Manitoba is home to the latest sighting to make something of a buzz around the world of Sasquatch research. Bobby Clarke, a ferry operator responsible for bringing people and vehicles over the Nelson River at docks located about 40 kilometres north of his home in Norway House says that while at work 6:30 Saturday morning (16th April 2005), noticed a black figure walking along the opposite river's edge about 250 metres away.

He grabbed his video camera - something he is rarely without - and started shooting. What he captured, according to his sister, Sharness Henry, is the image of a massive creature that stands eight, nine, maybe 10 feet (three metres) tall, walking along the edge of the water through some bullrushes.

Near the end of the video, the creature turns and appears to stare into the camera, but the details of its face are impossible to make out.

The full video is nearly three minutes long. I saw the video in May, and frankly, it shows nothing - a dark, moving 'Blobsquatch' - it could well be human, it could well be Sasquatch - we will never know.

That didn't stop the TV company that paid for the video from starting an 'expedition' in the area with a chainsaw wielding busty blonde. Bigfoot research has never been so good!

"Single Bigfoot Organisation Seeks Wealthy Businessman for Meaningful Relationship"

At least, that is how Matt Moneymaker's Bigfoot Field Research Organization should have worded their latest call for funds on their website.

On 31st May 2005, I was alerted to a statement on the BFRO.net website, which in no uncertain terms was a blatant request for \$3,000,000 from a private individual in order to obtain close range daylight footage of a family of Sasquatch.

Further, the BFRO statement guaranteed that these creatures had a 'language' "and thus the ability to communicate information from generation to generation, and individual to individual, helps explain how they could have been sharing the land with humans into modern times without becoming prey to humans"

Over the course of the day, the statement changed repeatedly, and was toned down - the \$3m figure went, as did the mention of the 'family', as did the mention of 'language'.

My experience of the BFRO has not been good, and it is no secret that I am not on Matt Moneymaker's Christmas card list, but if he can produce the goods with this venture, then good luck to him.

New Book Announced

Researcher Rick Noll has told me that a book version of the excellent documentary 'Sasquatch: Legend Meets Science' is in the works, and will be published shortly.

The documentary, which was broadcast in 2003, was something of a milestone in Bigfoot documentaries: it was the first time the subject had been taken seriously by film makers. My only criticism was that it was perhaps a little too short. I am certain that the book will put this right. With the recent publication of Chris Murphy's 'Meet the Sasquatch', it has been a good time just lately for books on the subject.

A roundup of recent sightings....

Georgetown, California Winter 2004

A local man has an unusual encounter where he hears growls, and has rocks thrown at his hunting party

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shortly afterward, he sees three Sasquatch it appeared to him that two of them waited for the third to catch up.

Carroll County, Ohio, May 2005

A young man hears a howl, and later, when leaving his mother's home sees a large creature cross the road in front of his jeep in three or four strides.

Union County, Arkansas, May 2005

A small (4' - 5.5'), upright, fur-covered animal seen crossing dead-end road at around 8pm.

Polk County, Texas, March 2005

Teenager sees something "big, black, hairy" through a bedroom window, whilst looking after her baby niece.

Montrail County, North Dakota, February 2004

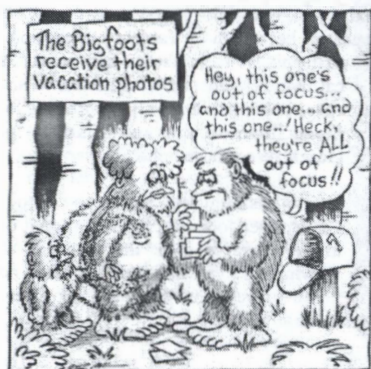
An unusual series of sightings over a period of three days by four separate witnesses, which suggested the creature was traveling south over a distance of some 35 miles.

Sagit County, Washington, June 2004

Large animal seen crouching near Baker Lake about fifty feet from where witness was camping.

Bigfoot Humour.

Someone sent me this recently. Try as I might, I could not find the artist to request permission to reproduce it, but it is very, very funny.



For more details about the CFZ BHM Study group, please email Paul at paul@vella.co.uk

'Artificial' Wild Men

I was recently sent a copy of this rather disturbing article from 1896 regarding the 'manufacture' of 'Wild Men' for carnival shows.

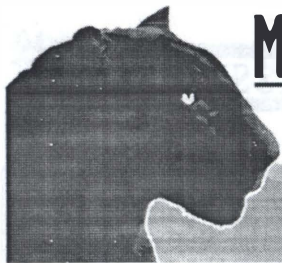
ARTIFICIAL WILD MEN. 1896

Kidnaped Chinese Children Mutilated For Exhibition Purposes.

There are many curious trades in the world, but the most strange must surely be the "artificial manufacture of wild men." Yet a well known English doctor in China has just certified from his own personal experience that this art is regularly practiced in the Flowery Kingdom.

First a youth is kidnaped, then bit by bit he is stayed alive, and the skin of a dog or bear grafted, piece by piece, upon him. His vocal cords are next destroyed by the action of charcoal to make him dumb, and the double purpose of causing "etiolation" of the skin, and utter degradation of the mental faculties is effected by keeping him immured in a perfectly black hole for a number of years.

In fact, by treating him like a brute for a sufficiently long time he is made into one. At last he is exhibited to the entirely credulous Chinese as a wild man of the woods, and his possessors reap a rich harvest. The priests, it seems, are adepts at the art. When a kidnaper, however, is caught by the people, he is torn to pieces, and when the authorities get him they torture and promptly behead him. Such is life under the rule of the son of heaven.



MYSTERY CATS DIARY

MARK FRASER

Each month Mark Fraser posts a list of the British Big Cat sightings for the previous month on the CFZ website. Starting with this issue, a selection of these entries will appear in *Animals & Men*.

1st May: Somerset / England

After several sightings of a large black cat in the Weston-super-Mare area, farmer Mark Penfold reported to the Western Daily Mail that he believed a large cat was responsible for an attack that killed one of his young calves on his land near Hewish. The farmer said that he had never seen an animal so thoroughly devoured in such a short time before. Recently while out lamping rabbits his light caught a pair of eyes that he did not recognize, he said: *"What I saw down the end of the lamp that night was something else, I have seen deer, badgers, rabbits, hares - I know what animals are out there - but not this."*

Mr Penfold also found a large print, which he says, was on a different scale to that of his large dog, a bull mastiff-American pit bull cross. "His footprint doesn't come anywhere near it," he said. Five other

friends also saw the curious mark. Shortly afterwards he found a flock of his neighbours sheep huddled in the corner of a field and apparently terrified in a "way that he had not seen before."

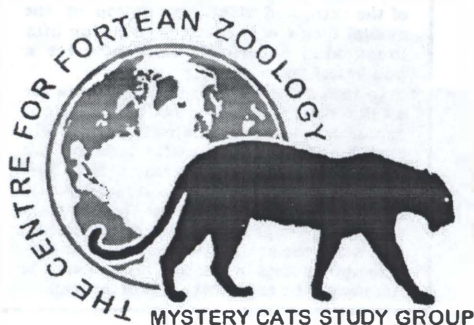
Mr Penfold has never seen the animal, apart from the eyes, but is positive that there is something out there, it's just that he is not sure what, exactly.

2nd May: Yorkshire / England

Mr Athey believes he spotted a lynx at close range while investigating bell pits near Wharfedale. As he approached one, a biggish cat got up, looked at him and walked over and went into an adjacent pit. This was from a distance of 10-15 metres away. Description was 3-4 times the size of a domestic, but very well-built; reddish-brown in colour with rough hair and no obvious tail.

The witness said that the legs were short, which doesn't fit lynx unless it was slinking away. When he got up the courage to look into the bell pit that the animal had gone into, he found that it had disappeared, but that there was a hole at the bottom of the pit. He feels that this may be where the cat lives. He doesn't know anything about cats and has subsequently scoured the local library for info on cats and feels that it most closely resembles a bob-cat.

After passing the message onto Christopher Johnston, he hotfooted it over to Yorkshire to meet the witness. After viewing the area Chris feels that this is not a home for the cat but was merely out hunting in the area.



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Approx 9th May: Gloucestershire /England

A large black cat has been spotted around Woodmancote, Badgeworth and Leckhampton. It is described as being a meter in length, with a small head and a long tail. Mary and Jim Alison believe the cat is responsible for decapitating their pet cat Tigger. Local big cat investigator Frank Tunbridge said the cat spotted in these areas is most probably the one and the same as they fit the same description, although he does state to the *Gloucestershire Echo* that he believes that are 500 big cats loose in the British countryside. John Blenkinsop said he saw the 'beast' along Stockwell Lane towards Cleave Hill at 7pm when he noticed something moving on the footpath to his right.

He said: *"It looked like a cat, only much bigger. It was about 3ft high. It slinked past a fence and then disappeared.* Huw Philips of Stackpole believes he may have solved the riddle of the large black cat often spotted in the area after finding the carcass of a dog otter which measured 41.5 inches in length with a girth of 26 inches. He said: "I have never in my life seen an otter this size. It would have been nearly four feet tall when stood up on its hind legs."

15th May: Surrey /England

Video footage was taken at Winkerton Arboretum by a Mr Harry Fowler which shows a Labrador-sized, sandy coloured animal walking along a path in the bright afternoon sunshine.

Mr Fowler said he was standing on the Azalea Steps when a woman nearby pointed out the animal, which was walking away from him towards Phillimore Lake, near the boathouse.

On the video you can hear the woman say: "It's huge! It's walking like a cat" before she cuts off. Mr Fowler describes the animal as gingery-brown in colour, about the size of an Alsatian dog and "definitely not a fox." He watched it for a good minute and a half from a distance of a 100 yards

and passed the film onto Surrey Wildlife Trust Ranger Mark Havler who said that it was difficult to make out exactly what it is. Although the Surrey Advertiser reports that Mr Havler believes it could be a Spanish lynx. Although the tail is plainly visible



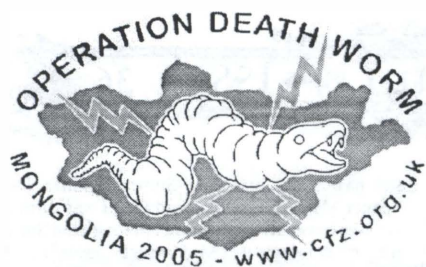
A still from video footage of a large cat-like animal taken by Harry Fowler of Guildford at Winkworth Arboretum, Godalming.

19th May: Bexley /England

Jim Hornby spotted the now famous 'beast of Bexley Heath' at 23.00hrs when at work just off Bexleyheath Broadway. He said: *"It was some time between 11pm and midnight. I was in the utility room at the back of the building and standing next to the open door, which leads onto the car park and then onto woods. I was chatting with the night supervisor when I saw something out of the corner of my eye, moving in the car park.*

"I turned and saw the shape of a big black cat, creeping along the ground on its belly by the side of my car, as if it was stalking something. It was much bigger than an ordinary cat, a fox or even a dog.

The next morning large prints were found in an area of sand measuring 5 inches across, the depth, reports the *London Shopper*, indicating that something heavy made it.



EXPEDITION REPORT: MEN AND MONSTERS IN MONGOLIA

Richard Freeman

In May 2005 the CFZ undertook its most ambitious expedition to date. A four-man team travelled to the Gobi desert in search of the infamous Mongolian deathworm; a vermiform, desert dwelling creature said to spit a corrosive yellow venom, and held in much fear by the Mongolian nomads who know it by the name of *alghoi-khorkoi* (pronounced "olra hoy-hoy"). The team consisted of myself, my two old travelling companions Jon Hare and Dr Chris Clark, and a new addition to the CFZ expeditionary force - Dave Churchill, aka "Davinian". Dave is a long-time member of the CFZ, and wanted to join the Mongolian expedition when it was first mooted several years ago..

Reports suggested that the deathworm emerged after rainfall and lives near sources of water. Therefore we proposed to try and dam some of the streams in the oasis in order to create localized floods, thus forcing the worms to the surface. Chris also proposed the use of bucket traps. These are buckets buried in the sand, with mesh netting strung between them.

The idea is that small creatures would bump into the netting then crawl along it until they reached and fell into one of the buckets.

We could then examine them in the morning. He also brought some small mammal traps so that we could try to catch potential deathworm prey for examination. We also had some leaflets printed up in Mongolian and distributed throughout the area we were visiting. They explained that a group of British scientists would be travelling through the area in May and offered a reward of \$50 for a specimen of *alghoi-khorkoi*.

Ulaan Baatar does not look very oriental. It has more in common with Russia and it's Eastern Block architecture. The Buildings are grey or dull brown and functional. The skyline is dominated by a massive power plant that burns coal and pumps it through big ugly pipe to heat the city. There were a few scattered gurs (the traditional circular, Mongolian tents) in back yards or clustering on the outskirts of the city. It seemed wrong to me that a race of nomads, the people of Genghis Khan, should live in this sedentary manner.

We were met at the airport by Byamba; the director of e-mongol.com, the company with whom we were travelling. Once closed to outsiders during the socialist era, Mongolia is now a popular destination with the more adventurous travellers.

We were introduced to our guides - Bilgee



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(pronounced Bilgay), a stocky, genial chap, and Tuglar (pronounced Tograr), a slightly shy looking man in his early 20s. Dave's connector could not be fixed so he was driven around the city in search of a new one. Whilst he was gone Byamba tried to contact a man named Boldbaatar who worked as a researcher in The Ministry of Science and Education. Boldbaatar had been researching the deathworm for some time, and Byamba wanted to introduce our team to him.

Boldbaatar claimed that he was just leaving his office on a research trip and would be away for over a month. Byamba suspected that he just didn't want to share his information.

Byamba introduced us to a friend of his called Damdin who told us of a man who had claimed to have seen a creature like a yeti only smaller a couple of years ago. However, when the beast was captured it turned out to have been a monkey that had escaped from the circus! Another story he had was altogether more interesting. His aunt had told him of a dragon that she has seen in a river in the 1940s. This

happened in the north of Mongolia just after WW2. The animal was dead and protruding from a frozen river. At first I thought it must have been a frozen mammoth but Damdin said it was long and scaly like a snake. It had been around 100 feet long but only the back was visible above the ice. It had been a very hard winter so the villagers fed on the dead dragon's flesh until the spring thaws washed the carcass away. If only they had kept a few scales!

In Mongolia, dragons are called *luu* (pronounced low). It is believed that they live in heaven and only descend to earth on occasion. They bring rain and when storm clouds form around a mountain peak it is called *luu hang*.

We were introduced to our drivers, Togoo and Davaa, and the vehicles that would be transporting us for the next month. They were tough little Russian all-terrain vans that had been customized into minibuses.

After breakfast we set off towards the wilderness. On a hill overlooking Ulaan Baatar was a large cairn of stones with a branch protruding. About the

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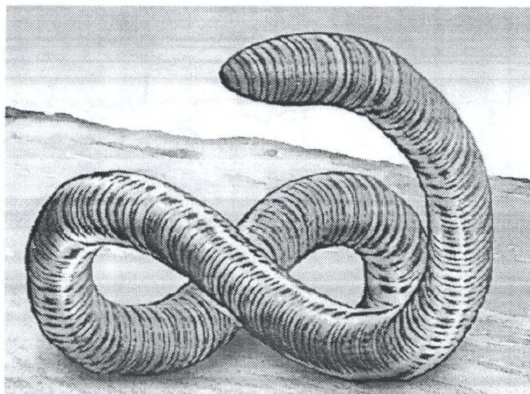
cairn of stones with a branch protruding. About the branch was tied blue cloth. Bilgee explained that it was an ovoo. Travellers would stop and walk three times round it and place a new rock upon the pile. This would ensure a safe return. We all added to the ovoo before moving on.

Close to the camp was a very big ovoo with a living tree at its centre. As well as blue cloth there were prayer-flags with the symbol of the air horse (emblem of Mongolia) upon them or representations of the creatures from the Mongolian zodiac that are much the same as the Chinese.

On the third day the terrain became more open and the desert gritty. As we drove Bilgee told me that one of our drivers had been in the area about ten years earlier and had tried to use a well but found it had been covered and locked. Upon enquiring about it, he was told that a dragon had entered the well. We located the well. It consisted of a cartyre around a hole filled with muddy water. It was only a couple of feet across so the dragon would have to have been very thin to fit into it.

We enquired at a nearby gur. The lady who owned the gur was most hospitable and we were soon gathered around drinking salty Mongolian tea. She told us that ten years ago an old wise man had seen a dragon entering the well. He had ordered it to be locked and said that no water should be taken from it. The local children became afraid.

The story got about and three government officials came to see him. As this was in the socialist era and the story was deemed to be religious and hence against the socialist thinking



of the time. The three men poured oil into the well as a punishment to the superstitious people. Soon after two of the men mysteriously died and the third remains childless to this day.

The woman did not see the dragon herself but she told us she it was supposed to change colour like a rainbow. To an evil person it would appear black.

That night we camped in the shadows of black, twisted mountains that would not have looked out of place in Mordor. We explored them and I can truly say that the feeling of being watched one gets in eerie places, was stronger here than anywhere else I have ever been

As we drove further south the land became flatter. I truly doff my cap to our drivers and the amazing way they navigate without benefit of roads, or landmarks. The terrain was monotonous. The area we travelled through was known as 'The Mirror' due to its flatness.

We decided not to camp that night and stayed with Davaa's family in Mongolia's second city Dalanzagad. The Mongolian equivalent of Birmingham made Ulaan Baatar seem like Venice

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or Prague but it did have an internet café where Dave could update the website.

Jon and Dave were accosted by a drunk who told them that they were fools to hunt for the allghoi-khorkoi as it had "killed thousands of people".

On the outskirts of Dalanzagad lived one of the witnesses who had seen our posters and contacted Byamba. Luvsandorj was a 90 year old former policeman. He lived in the Gur district of the city. He invited us in and following the tradition offered us some snuff from a bottle. I had never had snuff before, and thinking it churlish to refuse, I took a hearty pinch and snorted it up one nostril. I almost fell over with a fit of sneezing - much to the amusement of our host.

It had been 1930 when Luvsandorj had seen the deathworm. He was 15 back then and had been tending to cows when he came across a two foot long, reddish brown creature in the desert. It was about 4 inches thick and he could see no eyes or mouth on it. It was sausage shaped and moved slightly from side to side. He ran to tell his parents who warned him not to go near it as it was deadly. He drew a picture of what he had seen, a crude sausage shape. He provided us with the names and addresses of other people he knew that had seen the creature.

Next day we travelled deeper into the wilderness and tracked down one of the people on Luvsandorj's list. Juuraidor was a 70 year old camel herder who saw the worm in the 1950s whilst searching for lost camels. His description tallied with that of Luvsandorj's. Brown, two feet long, and with snake-like scales. He had heard that the worm was dangerous so he ran away. The encounter was in June. He also told us of a man who had put a deathworm on an iron plate. The plate had turned green. Another man that he knew, had wrapped a dead deathworm in three layers of felt. The worm

shrivelled up like a piece of leather, and the felt turned green. Both incidents had been long ago and no remains had been saved. Later that day we saw a group of rare Mongolian wild-ass galloping across the dusty horizon.

We had now entered the Gobi proper. We made camp in a rocky valley. Two men drove into the camp the following morning and introduced themselves. One was a grizzled park ranger the other a younger man with prominent golden teeth named Nyama. The latter had seen the deathworm on no less than three occasions.

The first was in 1965 when he saw the creature's head (presumably) protruding from a hole in the sand. The following year he saw a specimen in the process of swallowing a mouse. Finally he actually killed a worm - in 1972 - by throwing a rock at it. Some Russian scientists who had been in the area studying snakes took the body away. It probably resides, forgotten to this day, in some Russian museum basement.

Nyama said the worm eating the mouse was grey and 10 inches long. The other two were brown. The one he killed was between 8 inches and two feet long. They moved with a caterpillar like motion. The sightings occurred in a place called Dun-dus. He also heard tell of a deathworm killing a child by spitting venom but could not confirm this.

The park ranger and his family lived in a nearby gur. His wife had seen the worm just three years ago in an area close to the Chinese border. He invited us into his gur whilst we waited for his wife. When Sukhee, his wife, turned up she agreed to take us to the spot where she had seen the creature and remained with us for several days hunting.

She lead us the spot where she had seen the strange beast. She had been herding cows with her son when she saw an 18 inch, grey, worm-like thing slither out from a hole. Her son threw a rock at it

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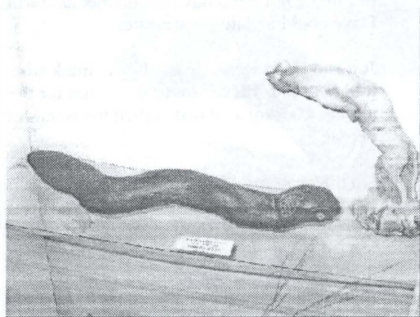
and it slid into some bushes. She ran away. It had been in September and it was very hot, about 40 degrees Celsius.

Sukhee told us there were two worms in the desert. One was the allghoi-khorkoi or intestine worm. The other was called the temrenii suhl or camel's tail. This was smaller than the deathworm and grey rather than red / brown.

A few days later we drove deep into the Gobi heading for the frozen gorge, a river that never thaws.

We visited the Gobi Museum, surely the remotest museum on Earth (unless there's one in Antarctica). Among the wide array of stuffed animals was a carving of the deathworm. Adam Davies had seen and photographed this a couple of years earlier. It resembled the witness descriptions apart from having clearly visible eyes.

A few days later we reached Noyon Sum. A *sum* is the Mongolian equivalent to a British county. Some sums are the size of Scotland. In the Sum Centre, (the largest and most important town in the sum) we had a meeting with the governor of Noyon. He had never heard of the deathworm but received the leaflets Bilgee had distributed. The governor did some digging and found out that in 1955, a man herding sheep had come



across a two foot long, grey creature with no discernable head or tail. The man fled in terror. He now lived in Dalanzagad.

The governor had found more stories. His driver told us that in the 1960s his mother in law had seen a deathworm. It was light grey and making holes in the sand. She ran away from it. The governor had found another local man named Damdin who had seen the creature in 1954-55. He gave us his address and we thanked him heartily and went on our way.

After a roundabout drive we found the gur belonging to Damdin's sister. She told us that her mother had seen it as well, also in 1955. She had been present at the sighting but was too young to recall it. Her mother said it was 2 feet long, brown, scaly, and as thick as a gur support pole (about 5 inches). She gave us directions to her brother's gur.

We found Damdin's domicile and he welcomed us in. He told us he had been out tending camels in May 1955. At about ten in the morning he saw a deathworm. It was brown, two feet long and about two inches thick. It made no movement. He ran to tell his parents and they warned him it was venomous. He returned to the spot he had seen the creature in and it was gone.



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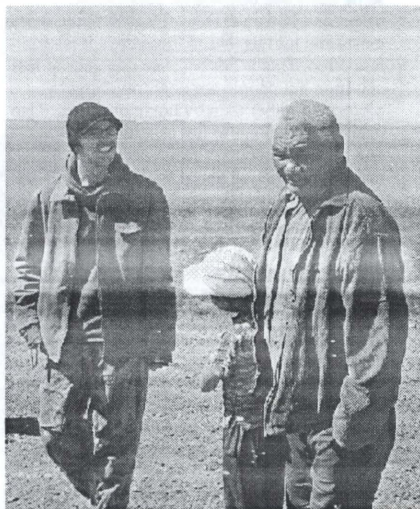
Damdin's family had been so frightened by what their son had seen that they packed up their gur and moved. He said that lots of families moved after seeing a deathworm. He heard tell of it killing animals by spitting at them. He took us to the area where he had seen the worm. The marks of his family's old gur were still visible in the gravel. The area was much disturbed by camel tracks. We felt it unlikely that the worm still inhabited this part of the desert. Another storm forced us to spend the night in the gur of one of Damdin's friends.

The next day Bilgee took our passports to be checked at a military base. We were once again drawing close to the Chinese boarder. He returned with a retired Mongolian Army Colonel called Hurvoo who wore a broad ten gallon hat. He had once been in charge of a base called Ovootin Otriyad.

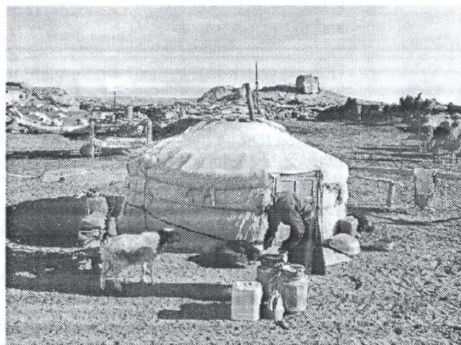
In 1973 he had been patrolling an area called Ulann Ovoo on motorbike. It had been in May and at sunrise. He saw what looked like an old tier in the desert. It was some sort of animal lying coiled up. His description was by now familiar, brown, two feet long, scaly, sausage shaped. Hid did say he saw light playing across it like electricity or light reflected from a mirror. This may well have been the rising sun

reflecting off it's scales. It had been raining and the worm was wet.

Hurvoo watched it for half an hour and it did not move. He drove off to get a camera but on his return it had gone. One year later a soldier reported that he had seen an identical animal. Hurvoo investigated but found nothing. He belived the worm came out after rainfall. We moved on to Gurantes Sum and stopped in hotel shaped like a huge concrete gur. We had a meeting with the govcnor of Gurantes, Deevat Serem who had distributed our leaflets in the area. He had a witness named Khuuhengaa with him. She had seen the worm in the 1980s when she had been a girl. She could not recall the exact year but it had been in summer. She was staying with her grandfather who called her to see it. The worm was 40cm long, brown and with no decernable head or tail. Her Grandfather told her it was venomous and she was afraid.



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Deevat told us of another sighting that occurred just last year. A man had been cutting reeds at an oasis called Zulganai. A man cutting grass lifted up the worm on the end of a stick and threw it away. Another man had seen the worm at the same oasis and claimed he could identify it's tracks and burrows. Deevat was sure the worm exists and told us that in these days it is seen less often. This is not because it is getting less common but people are now travelling by motorbike rather than by horse or camel. Also people are moving to towns, cities, and areas of sedentary residence rather than moving about as they used to. Hence the deathworm is encountered less often. We identified three oasis that we thought might be promising places to look, given that the deathworm was found close to water. He thought that the dragons seen in wells were just metaphors for poisoned water or ways of keeping people from drinking bad water.

The morning found us back on the trail again. We tried to locate the man who could identify deathworm tracks but he was not at home. We found the gur of Batdelger, the man who had

seen the worm in 2004 at Zulganai. His wife and son also saw the creature. They had been cutting grass to feed livestock at the time. His description differed slightly from the others. The worm he saw was 40 cm long and brown. It had a squarish head and what looked like large eyes, but these may have been part of a pattern on the skin. He did not think it was a snake as it was too thick. His son lifted the worm on a branch and cast it away. It felt very heavy.

We spent the night in a gur belonging to the family of the former local governor.

The next day we spoke with his wife who had seen an allghoi-khorkoi in 1957 in an area close to the Chinese border close to were Colonel Hurvoo had seen it. Once again our suspect was 40 cm long, brown and had no clear head or tail.

The ex-governor himself spoke to us and said he knew a man who had seen three large snakes some years ago. The biggest was 2 meters long and had a head shaped like that of a sheep. All three sported horns. There are horned snakes known to science. They include the rhinoceros



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viper and the horned viper. Their horns are in fact modified scales. However none is known from Mongolia and none reach two meters in length. We were unable to locate the witness.

Later we set up the bucket and small mammal traps again. The physical nature of the oasis with its steep sides made the damming plan impractical. In the twilight the colour of the rocks changed hue as you looked on. It was a spectacular display that looked more like special effects than a natural occurrence.

At day break we examined the traps. Apart from hordes of ants they were empty.

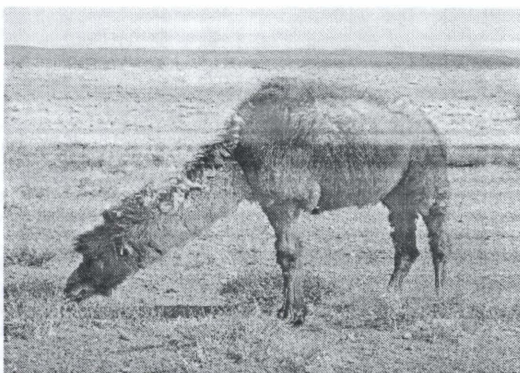
We moved on. Another epic drive brought us to the largest collection of vegetation we saw in the whole Gobi, the oasis of Zulganai. This was a mile long march with steep cliffs at one side and a kinder slope at the opposite side. It was filled with reed beds as tall as a man. At one end a narrow strip of woodland erupted and the oasis formed a second smaller pool. The water course ran on, to be lost in the desert. Large, savagely

horned bulls pranced through the reeds adding a little extra spice to the exploration.

We descended into the reed beds. There was much bird life including demoiselle cranes, spoonbills, and white storks. We say the strange flowers of the goyo erupting from the earth. These consist of reddish, phallic like butts that bring forth masses of tiny violet and blue flowers. They look a little like lupins.

We made camp and as dinner was being prepared we watched a whirlwind forming in the distance. It had started as nothing more than a dust devil but it rapidly grew in size. We watched it with interest, filming it as it slowly drew closer and built in size and power.

It approached the valley that curled up over the lip of the cliff and was upon us in seconds flat. Screaming like an angry djinn it tore through the camp shredding the tents and hurling dinner to the four winds. I was slammed against one of the min-buses and found myself in the eye of the twister. Togoo was entangled in the remains of a tent and dragged along the desert.



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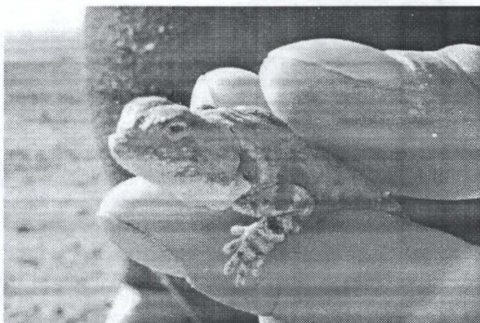
of a tent and dragged along the desert.

Then just as swiftly as it had come upon us, it was gone, sweeping out over the dusty plains and into the horizon.

The camp had been totally destroyed and night was falling. We had no choice but to drive 75km back to Gurantes and spend the night in the stone gur. It was as if the desert was rallying its powers against us jealous of its secrets.

Next day, we took the long dull drive to Sevree Sum. We saw a tornado on the way that dwarfed the one that destroyed our camp. We filmed it from a distance this time!

When we arrived in town, we checked into a tiny hotel. The matronly owner cooked us some delicious meat dumplings. The governor had heard of our arrival and invited us into his gur. His name was Tserendorj and his hospitality overwhelmed us. He told us that he was delighted that we were visiting him and that he did not think that scientists from abroad would be at all interested in meeting him. He seemed to think we were far more important than we actually were.



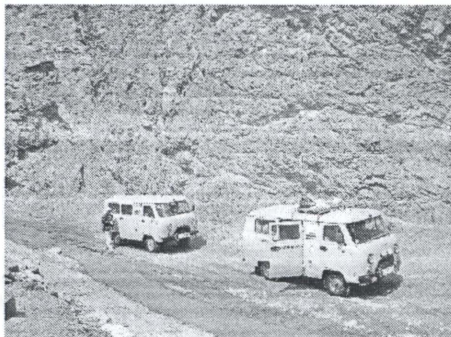
Tserendorj was a mine of information and together with his friends and family we consumed much vodka during a fascinating evening. He related a story of an old man who had seen the worm in 1957 in an area of the Gobi now owned by China. It looked like a length of blood-filled intestine. The same old man heard of a fellow prodded it with a horse goad and the end of the goad turned green. Both horse and rider died. This is reminiscent of stories of the basilisk in medieval Europe. Another man had seen it during the 1950s. It slithered out from under a rock and the witness threw a stone at it. The worm retreated back under the rock.



The governor introduced us to a 93 year old man whose grandfather had seen the worm in the 19th century at the oasis we had just left. He thought use of motorized vehicles and the population moving to towns was the reason that the deathworm was now seen less often.

He did not buy the idea that well-dwelling dragons were metaphors for bad water at all. He insisted that they were real creatures (and I am inclined to agree with him). He told us of a doctor from Ulaan Baatar who had seen such a creature in a

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did have a massive block of stone intricately carved into entwined dragons. It formally sat upon another block onto which had been carved untranslated script. It had been found in the desert some years before.

We were unlucky in so much as that nature was against us. May 2005 was colder and more windy than the norm. We intend to return next July in more clement weather.

Byamba is still trying to track down the doctor who saw the dragon. So far he has had no luck.

well just last year. This had occurred in Bulgan Sum. The doctor described what looked like a green scaled Chinese dragon coiled at the bottom of a well. Understandably, he was shocked. This was no nomad or peasant, but an educated man. The governor had also spoken to a man who had seen a horned snake in his youth. It was over two meters long and sported two horns. He found it outside his gur as a child. It did not seem aggressive and he played with it.

Years later, the man's wife died after a five year illness. A shaman told him that it was because he had touched God's sacred creature as a boy.

The governor invited us back next year to join in the celebrations for the 80th anniversary of his Sum.

We contacted Byamba and asked him if he could try to contact the doctor who had seen the dragon or find out his address in Ulaan Baatar.

Finally we made it back to Ulaan Baatar and checked into the Marco Polo hotel again. The next couple of days were spent around shops, museums and temples. We visited the library to see if we could turn up any information on the deathworm. They had nothing on the worm but

I believe that the deathworm is one of two things. It could be a worm lizard or amphisbaena, a group of primitive burrowing reptiles that are not worms, snakes or lizards, but are related to the two latter. Poorly studied, little is known about these creatures but they resemble the descriptions of the deathworm.



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Indeed they take their name from a legendary snake, the amphisbaena that had a head at each end of its body.

Another possibility is that it is an undiscovered species of sand boa - sausage-shape constricting snakes often found in arid climates.

Neither worm lizards or sand boas are venomous, but strange beliefs can grow up around harmless creatures. In the Sudan the natives believe that the sand boa is so deadly that one only has to touch it and the venom will soak through your skin and kill you. They call the sand boa the *apris* and go in great fear of it despite that fact that in reality it is harmless.

There could well be a species of horned snake in Mongolia probably a form of large viper. As for the dragons, well the massive international accumulation of sightings and folklore convinced me of their existence along time ago.

I have e-mailed Byamba some pictures of worm lizards and sand boas to show to witnesses he speaks with. Perhaps they will see something they recognise. For the time being the wind haunted, desolate Gobi is keeping its secrets.

THE COVER PAINTING

The painting on this issue's cover of *Animals & Men* was specially commissioned for the Operation Death Worm, Mongolia 2005 Expedition by Mongolian artist Jargalan Nergui. It depicts the legendary Allghoi Khorkhoi attacking Mongolian horsemen.

Jargalan was born in 1963 in Ulaanbaatar. He started his painting school at the age of seven, and for the next seven years studied with L. Batsukh, a famous art teacher. During his childhood, Jargalan entered numerous competitions and won major prizes. After attending the Art College of Ulaanbaatar from 1979 – 1983, he graduated from the Surikov Art University of Moscow, in 1989. He lived in the Gobi as an artist from 1993 to 1995 and now lives and works in Ulaanbaatar. He frequently travels to the countryside, the beauty of which is reflected in paintings of nature and nomadic life.

Prints of this painting are available from our online shop, via our main website or at the 2005 Weird Weekend. All proceeds from the print will help go towards funding the next



The British Lynx

Chris Moiser



When the sightings of alleged Alien Big Cats in the United Kingdom are quantified, the short-tailed stocky-brown lynx type cat seems to come third after the black panther and puma type animals. This is quite interesting because the lynx was almost certainly the last of the felids that originally lived on mainland Britain to have died out. Conventional received wisdom generally says that both the lion and the leopard died out 12,000 years ago. Until the last ten years or so it was generally accepted that the lynx died out in the late stone age or bronze age. In other words a palaeobiologist in the mid 1990s would have possibly said that the lynx was gone from Britain by about 1,000 BC.

A paper was published in 1997 (Kitchener and Bonsall) which dated some lynx bones recovered in Inchmadamp in Scotland to 180 AD. This news in itself may not seem to be that significant. The chances are of course that this wasn't the last lynx alive in Britain.

Despite the fact that lynx bones have been found in at least 20 caves, few have been carbon dated. I personally know of only two others, one from Cresswell Crag in Derbyshire, which dated to $9,570 \pm 60$ years before present and the other from Kitley caves in Devon which dated to 8930 ± 90 years before present. The cost of carbon dating is relatively high and samples more directly linked with human habitation are normally tested because archaeology is usually more concerned with humans rather than wild mammals. So if we assume that the animal that died circa 180 AD was not the very last individual on mainland Britain then it starts to bring the species into a period when historical records are being made.

Several of the books on Alien Big Cats, when considering the source of these animals, quote the writings of the venerable Bede and of Ralph (or Raphael) Holinshead. Both refer to "lions". The venerable Bede (circa. 673 - 735) was an Anglo-Saxon chronicler. In one of his writings he refers to Northumbrian shepherds as protecting their flocks from "lions". The quote from Raphael Holinshead (died circa 1580) is rather better known: "Lions we have had very many in the North parts of Scotland and those with manes of no less force than those of Mauretania; but how and when they were destroyed I do not yet read."

It appears that, at that time, the term "Mauretania" was used generally for Africa, and not just for the country South of Morocco and North of Senegal. The use of the term "lion" is almost certainly fairly generic too; in the days of Bede most of the population would never have seen a lion, and their only reference to one would almost certainly have been in bible readings.

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By Holinshead's time there may have been lions imported for the forerunners of the travelling menageries. Certainly King Henry I (1068-1135) had kept a menagerie at Woodstock. According to William of Malmesbury he had "lions, leopards, lynxes, camels, animals which England does not produce." The site of this collection is thought to be under what is now Blenheim Palace. It seems that a lynx may have also been imported in 1288 when King Edward I sent a lion and a lynx back from Gascony (where he was travelling) to the Tower (of London) Menagerie. The statement by William of Malmesbury and the action of Edward I would suggest that the Lynx was generally thought to be extinct by then in England. Scotland was of course a separate country at this time; and with a much sparser population.

Another literary suggestion that Lynx may have hung on well into the first millennium comes from the Welsh poem *Pa Gur*. It contains details of Cai (or Cei) who in the Welsh version of the Arthurian legend is one of King Arthur's inseparable companions. We would now refer to him as Sir Kay. Cei could come from Caus, a very common Roman personal name; or from the Irish Cai. As well as other exploits the poem tells of Cai going to Anglesey to kill "lleuon". lleuon tends to be translated as lion, or wild-cats.

Unfortunately, the story creates a number of questions, because Cai is specially prepared for a battle with Cath Palug (or Cath Paluc). Cath Palug may have been one of the "lions" of Anglesey, or may have been a leopard kept by one of the Welsh king if the conclusions of Geoffrey Ashe, an Arthurian scholar, are to be believed. Sadly the entire poem does not exist; it is not certain if the poem was ever finished or whether the end was lost. The age of the poem is difficult to establish, but its archaic style and content are supposed to date it to well before 1000 AD. In any event there is little likelihood that real lions would still be alive then; conversely the European Wild Cat would still be common enough throughout Britain that it is

unlikely that anyone would travel any distance to kill them. Similarly, because of the size of the European Wild Cat, it is unlikely to have been anything other than a minor agricultural pest or nuisance. The logical possibility is that it is the lynx, still present in small numbers in areas with sparse populations.

The much later sighting that many of the websites and books refer to is that of William Cobbett, (1763-1835) - a strange man who is often just described as a "radical". In his book *Rural Rides* he refers to seeing a cat as big as a middle-sized spaniel dog at Waverley Abbey near Farnham in Surrey. This was seen when he was a boy and is generally thought to be in the late 1760s. Later in life, in New Brunswick, he saw a "lucifee" which is another name for the North American Lynx, "and it seemed to be just such a creature as I had seen at Waverley". By this time the animal may well have been a menagerie escapee, because, although not well described, there were a number of travelling menageries in Britain by this time.

A report was made of the discovery of three lynx in the Daily Express on the 14th of January 1927. They had been killed in Scotland after a series of sheep kills. One of the bodies had been sent to the Zoological Society of London for identification. They were also probable re-introductions - whether intentionally or by accident, but the newspaper at the time does suggest that they may have escaped from a travelling menagerie. At this time, the travelling menageries were on the wane, with only one or two of the bigger ones still surviving. There were, however, some smaller ones attached to travelling funfairs. Such establishments would not have been regulated in any way and animal escapes, other than those of large mammals, may have been ignored or denied because of fear of civil litigation. Although the newspaper clipping of this report can be obtained fairly easily, London zoo records do not apparently indicate that the animal was received there and identified.

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More recent lynx matters tend to be a little sporadic. In 1991 there was a Eurasian Lynx shot near Beccles in Suffolk after about 15 sheep had been killed in the previous two weeks. The person responsible reported it to the police and Home Office, and was apparently asked to destroy the body and any photographs of it. He didn't do so, and the animal was subsequently mounted and acquired by a local collector. The story though, together with the picture, didn't surface for another ten years.

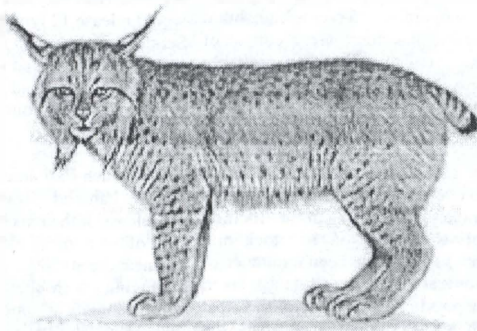
The tale of the Lynx of Cricklewood has a more positive ending. After initial reports of a sighting of a lynx in a garden in Cricklewood, in May 2001, the police, RSPCA inspectors and London Zoo staff attended. Following a six hour chase and the use of a blowgun

and anaesthetic/sedative dart by London Zoo staff the animal was eventually captured. This was a female Eurasian Lynx, about 18 months old, who after capture was taken to London Zoo and found to have a minor fracture in the back leg and to be slightly underweight. There was no indication where she had come from, nor subsequently any rumours in big cat circles. As the number of privately licensed animals is very few it seems likely that she was from an unlicensed source. Her acceptance of humans close to her in the period before capture would suggest that she was a recently escaped captive rather a longer term wild living animal. Aftersometime at London Zoo she was transferred to Amneville Zoo, in France, to be part of a breeding programme. Amneville zoo

specialises in cats and has a number of species.

The following year in Yorkshire two lynx were found in a shed in a joint police and RSPCA raid following a tip off by a member of the public. The owner claimed that the animals were going to be released for him and friends to hunt. Despite a *prima facie* offence of possessing unlicensed animals, no prosecution was brought. This came as a disappointment to at least one of the agencies involved. One of the animals died shortly after the

seizure. The other, a female was eventually transferred to the Cat Survival Trust at Welwyn in Hertfordshire, where she was placed with Bodie, a male Lynx who had apparently been seized by another local authority and was thought to be neutered. As a kitten was subsequently



produced, he clearly wasn't.

Another incident which occurred at some time in the 1990s is also of interest, unfortunately those involved cannot remember exactly when it occurred! This concerns two lynx which were allegedly being kept illegally in the West of Cornwall. One of these animals is said to have escaped and subsequently been hit by a car. The RSPCA became involved and the injured animal was conveyed to Newquay zoo. Unfortunately, it died in the van as arrangements were being made to admit it into the zoo's hospital (Thomas 2005). This matter has not really been reported in any detail except on one or two websites, and even then there have been some inaccuracies in the report.

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Licensing under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 is a matter for individual local authorities and as such there is no central registry of licensed animals. However there have been periodic reviews of the effectiveness of the Act. Typically these have involved the agency involved in writing to all the local authorities in the country and collating the results from all those that replied. In the 1988 review, one licence was identified which permitted the owner to possess one lynx. The 2001 review was not so specific and identified 125 "small felids" (after separating lions, tigers, pumas and leopards). The figure of 125 seems high, but it must be remembered that there are a couple of fairly large private collections which probably have the majority of these animals. The Cat Survival Trust for example typically has 40-50 animals. This recently included 5 Eurasian Lynx.

Reports of lynx that do not involve an actual animal being recovered, either dead or alive are greater in number. Typically these include sightings, footprints, attacks on livestock and attacks on humans. There have been a number of attacks on humans that may or may not have taken place. The attack on Mick Cole is one of the most believable when his version of events and his wounds are looked at. Mick is an optician and lives in Gravesend, Kent. On the 9th of January 2002 he came home and was putting his car away. As he got out of the car he saw what he thought was a fox with a domestic rabbit in its mouth walking down the back lane outside his property. As the rabbit was still struggling he decided to try and rescue it and charged "the fox" waving his arms and making a lot of noise.

Unfortunately as he got close to it he brought his arm down to try and retrieve the rabbit. As he did so the animal turned towards him, he realised that it was not a fox, but a larger feline type animal with pointy ears. Instead of dropping the rabbit it raised one paw and slashed him across the back of the hand. Mick, at this point, retired injured, and the animal that he subsequently identified as a lynx

carried on up the road, carrying the rabbit. His injuries were later treated in the local hospital and photographed. According to reports he bears the animal no malice and considers that it must have thought that he was attacking it.

A month later a somewhat different lynx related incident is alleged to have taken place in Scotland. The news story effectively started when the Observer carried a report that the "Rural Guerillas", a Scots underground group, stated that if the Scottish Parliament banned fox hunting they would release 12 lynx at four different locations in Scotland. Subsequent investigations found that the group was associated with the Wild Beasts Trust. This latter group had been in existence for some time and had been considering the release of lynx as early as 1996.

The Scottish Parliament went ahead with the fox hunting ban and it was subsequently claimed that the release of the lynx had gone ahead. The alleged sites of the releases were in the Borders, Galloway and near the 30,000 acre Balnagowan Castle Estate belonging to Mohammed-al-Fayed. To further court publicity it appears that two of the animals released on the latter site were called "Neil" and "Christine". Some of the lynx had allegedly been bought in France, but at least six of them were said to have been kept in a property on the Borders since Christmas 2001.

Lothian and Borders police claimed that there had been no evidence of the release, but suggested that such behaviour would amount to a criminal offence. A further point of interest was that Peter Clarke, a member of the Wild Beasts Trust, stated that if the Lynx prospered other species could also be re-introduced. His list of possible re-introductions included Walrus, Brown Bear, Lemming, Elk, Boar, Wolverine and Bison. The idea being to try, eventually to reconstitute the landscape that predated farming.

Later in 2002, in late November and Early

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December there were several newspaper reports of a lynx having escaped from a zoo in Scotland. The collection was called Kirkcudbright Wildlife Park, and some of the articles even had a description of the European Lynx given alongside the report. The animal was recaptured locally on the twelfth or thirteenth of December and was described as a little underweight suggesting that it had not been feeding. The collection has since changed hands, and is now called Galloway Wildlife Conservation Park. When I contacted the new owners they confirmed that the escaped animal was in fact a Caracal (aka as African Lynx or Desert Lynx) and that she is still exhibited in the park. Ironically, her name is "Wander".

This particular case illustrates the importance of not always accepting species identification or other facts in a newspaper at face value, with at least three newspapers having incorrectly identified the animal in a situation where its identity was not in doubt.

Despite the fact that this animal has been confirmed not to be a lynx I have included the details because of the need to recognise the possible confusion between species and partly for fear of being accused of having missed this report of an escaped lynx. It is possible that the reporter(s) having heard the word caracal had not heard it before and decided to refer to African Lynx or Desert Lynx, which was subsequently edited down to Lynx. The mistake may have escaped any knowledgeable scrutiny at the time because the park exhibited (and still does) both Caracal and Eurasian Lynx.

The issue of releasing animals back in to the wild was raised again in late 2004 and early 2005. In November 2004, Paul Lister who owns the 23,000 acre Allandale Estate, North of Inverness, started a series of talks with his neighbours about the possibility of fencing the entire estate and re-introducing bison, wolves, wild boar, brown bears and lynx. Then in January 2005 David

Hetherington, a PhD student at Aberdeen University, published a report of his investigation into the possibility of re-introducing lynx. He has taken the view that Scotland has more than enough of the right habitat and more than adequate non-domestic livestock prey to support the species. He also considers that because the lynx is primarily a cat of the woods it will effectively stay away from sheep and focus primarily on Roe Deer

The discontinuous group of facts contained within this article do not really supply any obvious conclusions. They more realistically raise a series of questions, some of which there are unlikely to be any substantive answers for. We may never know, for example, when the Eurasian Lynx became extinct in Great Britain. It would seem sensible with the current state of knowledge to suggest that it was probably at some time in the first millennium. However as the wolf certainly survived into the second half of the second millennium, and may in part have become extinct through habitat destruction and destruction of its prey rather than direct hunting, (although this did of course take place), it would perhaps seem strange if the lynx, which are generally solitary animals and more secretive than wolves, became extinct first.

Similar timing issues occur with bears. The Brown Bear may have remained present in small numbers until the end of the first millennium, if this is so it also survived the suggested extinction of the lynx by some reasonable time despite its large size and the greater ease with which it is hunted. The argument with the bear though is possibly less convincing because of the real uncertainty of when it became extinct.

The second series of questions relate to the presence of unlicensed animals within Britain. At least four, possibly six, have been seized within the last fifteen years, additionally there is evidence of one having been shot in the same period, and suggestions of up to twelve having been imported for illegal release in Scotland. It therefore remains

to be established whether or not there is a UK captive population of unlicensed animals or whether there are occasional (illegal) imports of animals from other countries. In either case it would be interesting to know how many, if any, unlicensed animals were released here without the details having been recorded anywhere. Similarly it would be interesting to know whether the released animals have become established anywhere for any length of time, and whether there is, as is widely believed, a potential for them to re-establish in the wilds of Britain.

I would be very interested to hear any information on these matters, whether second or third hand, and, if necessary anonymously.

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CFZ PEOPLE



This has been a spectacularly weird issue of the magazine to put together, and as I sit in my new study in Woolser typing this, it is three days before the *Weird Weekend* and I am hoping against hope that we will manage to get the first few copies printed in time.

Recent events have shown that we are, indeed, a community in every sense of the word. My father's illness has sparked such a torrent of kindness and good wishes, that at times I have found myself overwhelmed by it all. The fact that he is being looked after by the 'boys from the CFZ' when those whom society has made responsible for the plight of people like him have been found completely wanting, says - I think - quite a lot. Also on the sick list at the time of writing is poor old Davey Curtis. He was supposed to come down to Exeter to do the sound for the WW again this year, but he has been taken ill, and it seems that a sojourn in hospital is likely. Get well soon pal - our thoughts and prayers are with you.

As I have written in the editorial, it is all change here at the CFZ, with Mark, Graham and me taking up the rural life, but as we went to press it emerged that Oll Lewis is probably moving to Exeter in the next few months to fill the gaps in the town-house, so, not for the first time in my life I am minded of the *Grateful Dead* on *Trucking*:

"What a long strange trip its been"

Damn right!

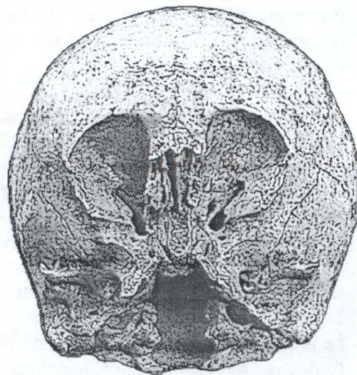
The Postmortem-Distortion theory of the origins of the 'starchild skull'

Oll Lewis

The story of the skull that has become known as the "starchild skull" - or, at least, the modern day chapter - began around 70 years ago when an American girl visiting relatives in a village 100 miles from Chihuahua, Mexico, went exploring in the local caves and happened upon a gruesome discovery. In the words of LLoyd Pyc, the leading proponent of the extra-terrestrial origin theory for the skull, this is what she found:

At the back of a mine tunnel she found a complete human skeleton lying on the ground's surface. Beside it, sticking up out of the ground, was a malformed skeletal hand entwined in one of the human skeleton's upper arms. The girl proceeded to scrape the dirt off a shallow grave to reveal a buried skeleton smaller than the human one and also malformed. She did not specify the type or degree of any of the "malformations." (Pyc, 1999) ¹

Pyc's theory on the origins of the 'starchild' skull is that it is the skull of an alien-human



hybrid and he puts this theory across on the Starchild Project's websites (<http://www.starchildproject.com/> and <http://www.starchild-uk.com/>). He has gathered several thousand dollars of funding and devoted a large amount of his own income to proving this theory.

I do not seek to disprove his theory in this article but I believe my theory can certainly help to explain many of the abnormalities in the appearance of the skull and those identified by Pyc and his team during their research, including why the bone is so strong, yet much thinner than that of 'normal' bone, and the peculiar shape of the skull and shallow eye sockets.

One is welcome to believe what one wishes and it could be that neither this theory nor the alien hybrid theory is correct, or even that they both are: after all, even if the starchild skull was produced by the process I

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outline in this article it does not necessarily mean that no attempts of breeding has ever occurred between humans and aliens, just maybe not in this case.

The first clue as to what may have occurred lies in the story of the skull's discovery: it was found in a mining area in the 1930's. The 30's was well into the golden age of mining; steam-powered mine pumps were by now a well-established technology and minerals, metals, coal and indeed anything that came out of the ground was fetching a high price, yet wages for the miners could be kept fairly low as pit owners did not have to pay insurance or danger money. Many people in North America were desperate for jobs, no matter how low paid, as a result of the Great Depression. This, of course, meant that, where there was a good seam of anything in the rocks, mines sprung up like fungi, their hyphae drilling through the strata to quickly give the bedrock the appearance of Swiss cheese, because there was serious money to be made. Deep mines act like storm drains to the surrounding rocks and this water has to be pumped out and taken elsewhere by means of man-made pipes and aqueducts, which lowers the water table of the area considerably. In the Welsh valleys, for instance, there are tales of some streams disappearing practically overnight because of mining activities up-river. Such a drop in the water table would have occurred in the caves and mines "100 miles from Chihuahua" as it did in every mining area.

The second clue is the skull itself. I was fortunate enough to attend a talk about the skull and its peculiarities, given by LLoyd

Pye at the 2004 *Fortean Times* Unconvention, after which Mr. Pye retired to a side hall where he signed and sold copies of his books and let the general public examine an exact resin copy of the skull. To me, as a biologist-cum-paleontologist, the most interesting thing about the skull was not the strange distorted shape, but just how thin the bone was. The bone of the skull was perhaps the thinnest bone I had ever seen and Mr. Pye informed me that this was indeed the thickness of the original sample. Sadly, that's as far as my questioning of Mr. Pye went, as he decided to ignore my further questions upon the topic. However, he had stated in the talk that he gave that, despite being thin, the bone was incredibly strong, when drilled for a sample.

There is a natural process by which the shape of bones and proportions can change and become distorted. It also can explain how bones can become thin but much harder and stronger too and occurs where there is a change in the water table of an area. This is what I think may have happened to the skull:

* At some time the child soon to be known as 'starchild' died. As it was found with another skeleton then it is possible it was the victim either of a sacrifice, or murder, that the cave it was discovered in was a burial ground for whatever tribe it came from. Without further archaeological evidence (which is unlikely to be forthcoming as the exact location of the find is now unknown) not much can actually be said of cause of death - other than speculation - and it is unknown whether the child had any deformity at the time of death.

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* If the story of how the starchild was found is accurate in the retelling, then the entrance to the cave became blocked at the time of the starchild's death/laying to rest or very soon after, as the other skeleton appeared to be complete, meaning no scavengers had the chance to pick at the bones or the body.

* Time passed and the cave would have had water slowly seeping into it, bringing with it silt and mud from outside explaining the partial burial of the skeleton (If you were burying some deformed anathema to your culture then you certainly wouldn't bury some of it then sod off to the Aztec equivalent of the pub for the after-party with the rest of the lynch mob).

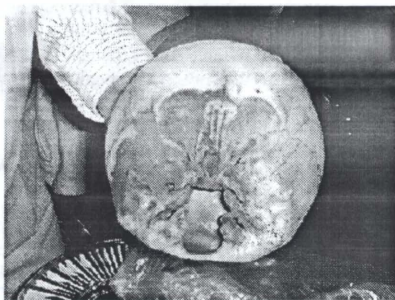
* As a result of being buried in water-saturated mud, the bones would also have become saturated with water, creating a fragile but pliable crumbly mix. The silt would have stopped the skull from caving in on itself, because, as the brain had rotted away, silt particles would have replaced it, thus giving some support to the skull. There is only so much weight wet silt can carry, and it will tend to spread out as much as possible in the horizontal plain. This accounts for the strange shape of the skull. It also accounts for why the eye sockets of the skull are large in circumference but very shallow in depth (they would have been stretched out by the weight from the silt inside the skull) and why much of the 'face' of the skull is missing (there would have been little to support this apart from more bone so it crumbled under the weight of the silt over the time it was buried in the water saturated environment, which could have been hundreds of years or decades, it is

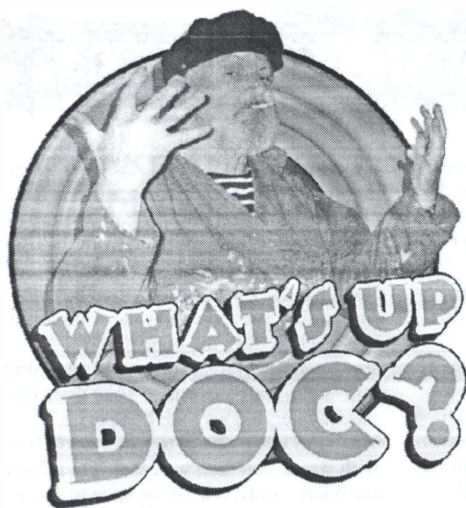
impossible to tell without reliable carbon dating).

* Sometime later, mining came to the area and the water table dropped from the use of pumps to clear mines lower down of flooding. This would have dried out the starchild's cave too and as the water drained and leached from the bone to the surrounding silt the skull would have dried out. When water-saturated bone dries out in this manner, the way the bone dries is similar to when one gets a sponge, fills it with water, and then squeezes it to release the water - only, unlike the sponge, the bone won't pop back into shape. It sets as thin concentrated bone, or, to put it another way, thin strong bone.

* A mine shaft, or tunnel, cut though the cavern, leading to the skeleton's later discovery and exhumation.

I believe that this postmortem distortion theory can account for all the deformities of the starchild skull quite neatly and I think it also illustrates that things don't have to be strictly 'paranormal' to be capable of high strangeness.





EDITOR'S NOTE: It is a great pleasure to welcome the Wizard of the Western World back to these pages. The following article is culled from a brace of letters that "Doc" sent the office in May and June. Proving (as if any proof were needed) that there is indeed no such thing as a coincidence, at the same time as Mark and I were preparing these pages, we received an email from Sam Shearon, the artist responsible for the most famous image of the Green Drive beastie...

It's been a while, but the thought came to me that I should send you a note concerning the 'Beast of Green Drive', Lytham, Lancs. By the time you receive this, I'll be there, on the spot, so to speak, according to the plan (oops!), flying from Kerry to Manchester tomorrow evening, as Bela Lugosi would say.

I'm told it (the 'Beast') is both dog-like and goat-like, which is a good start. Nobody seems to have considered the tales about that old Lytham witch, Meg Shelton (or Megs Hilton), famous for her shape-shifting powers. She did a goat/dog

shift (Cutty Sark link?) from time to time. Check certain writings on witchcraft in Lancashire, apart from the Pendle crew. So, the Green Drive beastie could be Meg(s), up to her tricks again.

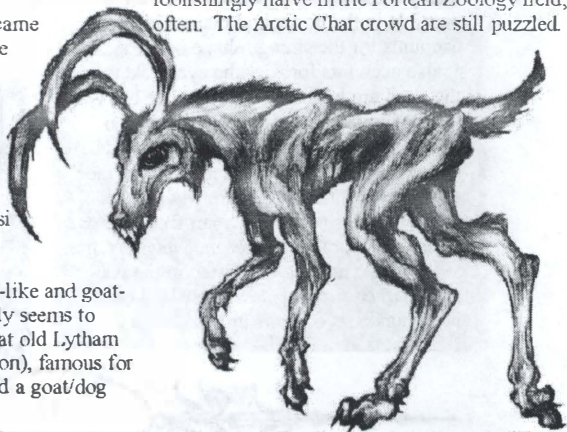
By the by, many years ago, I would sometimes caddy the Green Drive Golf Club. Balls to that, sez you. Anyway, as you know, shape shifting is a kind of lycanthropy, and the lass could do more than 'go into a hare'. The Fylde region is profoundly od, take Blackpool for instance. One of the most noted names in the area is Talbot.

Something of a giveaway, wouldn't you say? There are roads, streets, squares, and such like named Talbot, The Fylde region. One, naturally, considers Larry of that ilk and the O'Talbot Kelly crew. I'm serious, almost.

You should also consider the golf links, and any pun was intended.

Shift (again) the scene to those Killarney Lakes, and remember Pat Kelly's rendering of the 'wurrui'. He was an O'Talbot, and there's a well known golf course to hand on the shores of Lough Leane, as Daev Walsh would tell you.

Mucky or Muckie, the Killarney lake monster. I'm connecting 'it' with the Beast of Green Drive and the Sea Head of Dingle, and why wouldn't I? The links are so obvious, but people are foolishly naïve in the Fortean Zoology field, often. The Arctic Char crowd are still puzzled.



THE BEAST OF GREEN DRIVE

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again Mucky the lake monster and (what will we call it?) 'Greeny'. The Green Drive Beast, deserve your attention. Talbot and Meg Shelton are, I'm fairly sure, part of the plot. Also, there's more than

a hinten of Munchausen involved. Don't misunderstand me, I refer to the guy who wrote the tales. He was buried near the lake, Killarney, after being involved with tin and copper mining, steam engines, etc. I kid you not.

Goat Suckers are never too far away.

Wouldn't be writing this if didn't feel, in my water, that something's a foot. Maybe the merry morning of this month did it, a few weeks ago.

Some weeks later.....

I'm back in Ireland after a truly strange little Fylde adventure. On the day I arrived, a cousin showed me a piece in the 'Daily Mail' about Frank Searle, recently glog-popped. He had been lying low in Fleetwood of all places. Sea Heads have been seen there of course. Searle's death was and is, it seems, 100% authentic. Then I heard about a runaway tortoise (Greck sort), name of Tommy, who has the habit of chasing lawnmowers. He recently left home (Freckleton) for several days, but was captured and returned after a report on his wanderings appeared in The 'Lytham St. Annes Express'

More importantly, I hunted for the Beast of Green Drive, Lytham. Not just around Green Drive but also Lytham Park, the Clifton demone much of which is wooded. It's now owned by

The Guardian Royal Exchange Insurance mob.

Naturally, I explored Lytham hall as part of the investigation and talked to a lot of people there, including a gamekeeper.

Anyway, it seems that the 'Beast' is a malformed muntjac; at least in the opinion of some folks from that area. Muntjacs are fairly weird buggers anyway- the bucks, at least, with their tusks and barking 'voices'. What the hell a muntjac is doing in the Lytham woods is shall we say, a mystery?

I raised the subject of Meg Shelton, the Lytham witch, with a couple of my sand-grown informants, who know about witchery. They suggest that if Meg could shift into a goat or dog. She could just as easily appear as a muntjac, male or female.

As you probably guessed, an attempt to 'raise' Meg-as-muntjac (or whatever) was made, with the help of some friendly unclothed women who sadly, wouldn't allow me to take their pictures. So, you could call my jaunt a bit of a failure, but it was bloody good fun. I'm not the wizard I was. Who cares? In fact, I'm much better than I was, but it doesn't matter.

On the subject of Lancashire witchcraft, I thought it a nice wee coincidence that the 'Mail' article on the death of Frank Searle (couple of months after the event) was written by a lad called Pendlebury. Ah well, suit yerself. Pendle Bury were known for their witches. The Pendle Hill coven was known for causing strokes, by cursing, and old Frank had a stroke some years back. These connections are always interesting in a daft kind of way.

That'll do,

Doc ☺

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Letters to the Editor

The Editor and his band of merry men welcome an exchange of correspondence on any subject of interest to readers of this magazine. We reserve the right to edit letters and would like to stress that opinions voiced are those of the individual correspondent rather than being necessarily those of the editorial team or the Centre for Fortean Zoology. Every attempt is made not to infringe anyone's moral rights or copyright, and we apologise if we have unwittingly done so.

BABY LEMONADE

To whom it may concern.

Hello, my name is Amy Butler. I live in Springfield Illinois, USA. I just finished reading about your visit to the shawnee forest in southern illinois. I was interested in this because of the black panther sightings that took place there. When I was a small child around the age of 5, my parents and I had our own "run in" with such a creature...I'm not sure if you were aware of this but throughout the years there have been countless sightings....since the 1800's in fact, of black panthers near the Decatur Illinois area and also around the Sangamon River area. My

experience took place around 1980, but I believe the most recent one was in 1998. Anyway, I just thought you might be interested.

Thanks for your time,

Amy Butler

MAISIE

Hi Jon,

In the afternoon of April 24th (about 16.00) my girlfriend and I were having an ice cream at Talland Bay in Cornwall (slightly to the west of Looe), when a prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) ran under the wall by our feet, along the edge of the beach and up into the deep dense scrub to our left (east).

The light colour, body shape and black tip to the tail were diagnostic, as were the rodenty back legs as it scurried away. The animal was in vision for only 3-4 seconds, but was heard scurrying for a few seconds before being seen.

I spoke to the cafe owner - very close - he has only been there for 8 weeks and was aware of a lot of local wildlife, but not of anything exotic. Exploration of the area did not reveal any typical mounds or any other signs of these animals.

I am aware that the Woolly Monkey sanctuary at Looe had Prairie dogs years ago, but that there were escapes and the animals were apparently translocated elsewhere. Talland Bay though is the other side of the Looe river and would therefore be effectively some distance away from the sanctuary, from a rodent's viewpoint.

I shall endeavour to inform the County Recorder, and would be most interested to hear of any other local reports.

Yours sincerely,

Chris. M. Moiser,

Plymouth

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RATS

Greetings Jon and everyone.

I am very interested in these eel stories, but so far they have not "solidified". I am currently constructing some new infra-red tv cameras, hoping to add to our knowledge of these and other bottom dwelling fish. I will offer a few comments, which I trust will be taken as constructive.

Local investigation failed to find any witnesses of exceptionally large eels at the Aluminium Works at Foyers, which ceased production in 1967. (an otherwise splendid year :-)) The nearby Hydro Electric Power Station at Foyers does not have a "cooling system". It's a pumped storage system. Dore, some 10 miles to the north-east, has an excellent hotel and beach, but no "aluminum" (as they say in the US) or other works. The Canadian tourist episode has been satisfactorily resolved as a misidentification of abandoned pipework from the derelict fish farm near Dore. (see "Ness Information Service, NessLetter 148, ISSN 0204-7001) April 2005.

[You can subscribe for £3.00 by writing to:

R.R.Hepple, 7 Huntshildford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ, UK]

When fishing for eels, flotation devices might not be terribly useful - they are bottom feeders. Finally, some sewage is dumped into Loch Ness, but Loch Morar has very little domestic input, so I would be surprised if the same conditions applied there. I'd be pleased to assist in any future work up this way - just email me. And as always, I'm willing to be corrected if I am wrong!

Best Regards

Dick Raynor, Loch Ness.

SCREAM THY LAST SCREAM

Hi

I was given your email address by Mr. Fern. He stated that you might be interested in my story as well: Around March, 2000, my sister was a little shaken and said that something flew over her. It reminded her of a witch on a broom. She told me what it looked like to her. I thought, "*Yeah right.*"

In May, 2000 I was coming home from work around 6:30pm. On the corner of my house was this big black shape. Wasn't sure what it was, so I sat there for a few moments trying to believe what I was really seeing. It turned it's head and I could make out the shape of a human head (no beak!). a wing span of 6 feet or so, its legs reminded me of big frog legs, but end up like human feet with claws. I ran inside and called my sister. She said, "*You see, I told you I saw something!*" I knew that it wasn't a bird because I got goosebumps (I rarely get goosebumps when I do not know what I am seeing). I had dogs that would jump the fence, so I was out with them almost every night. I would always look at the neighbour's tree at night looking at the sky through the limbs and leaves (I'm an artist and that was one of the things I would do to pass the time away watching my dogs.) I would walk around and all of a sudden I would get goosebumps.

I knew where to turn to, I would look at my neighbors tree and what had been leaves and night sky had turned into a solid black mass. (My dogs could never sense this). I would speak and say things like, I don't know if you are lost or injured, but you are safe here, but if you hurt my animals, I will hunt you down. I don't know if it understood or not, but it would just hang around. This went on for two months.

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The last time I saw it, it was on the ground by the fence. I thought it was my dog *Abbey Gayle* (she was black) and I was making fun of her doggie duties that she was doing.

She opened her mouth and I said, "*Abbey, you have the prettiest teeth I have ever seen, look how they shine in the moonlight.*" I heard lick lick noises and Abbey was at my feet, she wasn't at the back fence. I just stood there for a moment. And it just went up effortlessly and that was the last time I saw it. I still go out in the yard now and then to see if it had come back, but the neighbor cut down the tree and I never saw it after that.

This wasn't a bird. I guess in layman's term, a mothman? I remember how effortlessly it could just stand and fly off. Almost like it had a string on it and it was gently pulled up. Never a sound. It was big and always stayed in the shadows.

Mr. Fern mentioned something about an owlman. Since this creature was always in the dark, I would have to say that it didn't have feathers. The skin was black as black oil. But in the shadows, it never looked soft. Always cold and hard. I don't know if that made sense or not.

One of the strangest things that happened to me after this, I didn't mention this to Mr. Fern, is that I started doing these strange black abstract drawings.

It was like this shape had to come out of my mind. Like it couldn't comprehend what I had seen, so all my brain knew what to do was to bring it out in a drawing. (Never turned the drawings into paintings like I wanted to.) Thank you for your time,

bye

Rence (via email)

LONG GONE

Hello Jonathan,

I hope you are doing fine physically as well as Cryptozoologically.

I read your very last issue of *Animals & Men* which I found very interesting as usual.

Regarding the subspecies of Tigers which are all supposed to be extinct since quite a long time I would have like to know where did you get your information concerning a Caspian Tiger who was supposedly captured in NE Afghanistan in 1997 since nobody knew about it until now and also your mention of tracks and sightings found on the Turkey/Iran border which suggest that Tigers still survive there.

It would be quite surprising if proved right !

Two years ago I had the chance to talk to the Ex-Ministry of Natural Parks and Wildlife in the sixties and the 1970s under the ex-Shah of Iran who informed me that all tigers have disappeared of the region between the mid 1950's and the early sixties : the last tiger was shot in Gorgan National Park in 1962...!

The last lion was shot in the 1870's by his own great grandfather in the Iraq-Iran border but there might have been sightings up to the 1940's...!?

Also very instructive information to see that there are still dwarf species of primitive hominids in Indonesia and not only in Africa....!

Awaiting to read you soon ,

Till then,

Best Cryptoregards,

Georges Massey,

Switzerland

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OPEL

Dear Jon Downes,

I have read with interest this mother's day morning here in Tennessee about your Southern Illinois visit into the Shawnee National Forest.

I have never visited there although I have a close research friend who does quite often in the portion of the Shawnee National Forest in Ohio.

This forest is in other states I believe---- Ohio, Kentucky (maybe) and Illinois, possibly Indiana. I haven't studied or went to a map to know for certain, but do know my friend researches it often and travels from Portsmouth, Ohio there to this forest. He has found many strange things he has told me. I was born in Ohio, grew up there but moved to Tennessee many years ago. I once moved to a place in Putnam County, Tennessee about 40 miles distant from the Kentucky border, (middle TN, northern portion) and prowled the woods for over 3 years while I lived there, even finding a huge underground roaring river with a deep sink hole you could peer down into.

My husband has also found several of these large black cats in Putnam County, be they panthers, cougars, whatever, while in his journeys in the woods. They did stalk him a time or two. He saw them several times and told his friends about them who always laughed at him. He took one such friend bow hunting for deer in the area he had seen them in before and the two men positioned themselves in certain places. The friend was then challenged by one of the black cats, squalling loudly at him. It frightened him so much he could not ready an arrow but threw his bow at it and fled and this young inexperienced man did too.

My husband at the time in 1973, had to run after him and catch him. Needless to say, it made a believer out of this young man too. I do know this area and have talked with others who have seen these big black cats there. Hunters have told

me of seeing them in Southern Kentucky also. Therefore, Illinois is not alone in their sightings of black cats. I would be able to take you to the area where these cats were way back in the early 1970's or my ex could, but it is difficult terrain and dangerous with many rattlers and copperhead snakes.

Just thought I would let you know that this is not too far away from Illinois and that these type of cats are seen in Tennessee also. I'm very interested in seeing one myself, and maybe some day I will. We also have the western cougar this far too, having a friend seeing one cross the road in front of their truck one morning while going to work several years back. Others report them here also. I think the cougar and these black cats are becoming more common over the years. I can think of other reports as I type that I've heard from persons living in remote areas of Tennessee forests who have seen them also, even around their houses. Therefore, with so much eyewitness testimony, I'm certain they do exist.

Mary Green

www.bigfootlady.net (under heavy construction)

CLOWNS AND JUGGLERS

Hi,

I don't want to appear to be the huge Loch Ness sceptic here - after all it was I that first suggested that the video on the CFZ website showed Goosanders - but the photo on the Forum of Nessie's tooth is undoubtedly a shed roe deer antler. I have an almost identical one at home that I found last spring in deepest Norfolk. As for the track footage, can't see a lot on that except mud, but the "eel-shaped furrows" remind me of otter slides that I have seen down to rivers.

Cheers, Phil, via email

EDITOR'S NOTE: I agree entirely!



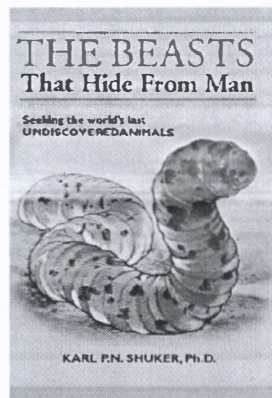
REVIEWS

Beasts that hide from man

Dr Karl Shuker

(PARAVIEW ISBN 1931044643)

Karl's first book for Paraview is a collection of his writing for magazines on both sides of the Atlantic. As an Englishman there was plenty here that I had not seen before such as many of his articles for *Fate*. I'm sure that the inverse of this is true to folk in the USA and Canada.



As well as containing articles not seen before *Beasts that Hide from Man* (the title taken from an episode of Arthur C Clark's Mysterious world) deals with less well known cryptids including giant flightless birds

in Australia, undiscovered species of bats, the Mongolian deathworm, and tzuchinoko the bizarre flat snake of Japan.

The book is a real pleasure to read and Karl's writing is both informative and entertaining. Like a lot of Karl's work it has a feeling of the Victorian naturalist about its style. I know of at least one total newcomer to the field that was total entranced by this book. With not a dull line in it *Beasts that Hide from Man* is a fine edition to the ever-growing Shuker crypto-library. Hope we don't have to wait too long for his next book.

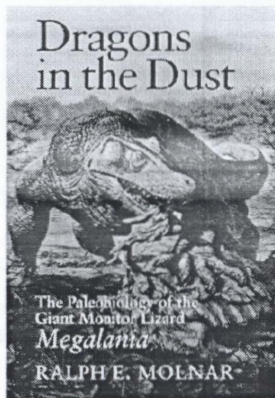
Dragons in the Dust; the paeleobiology of the giant monitor lizard Megalania

Dr Ralph Molnar

(INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS
ISBN 0253343747)

Megalania prisca, the giant monitor of Ice Age Australia is surly one of the most spectacular beasts to walk the earth since the time of the dinosaurs. We have known of it's existence since Victorian times so the big surprise just how little we know.

Megalania is known from only a handful of fossils. Few teeth, vertebra, rib bones, claws, and skull fragments. By necessity a great deal of Molnar's



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Molnar's book is educated guess work. We do not even know how big megalania got. Molnar's guess is a little over 7 metres or 23 feet. Because we don't have a full skeleton we don't know the length of the tail. In some species of monitor this makes up about half the length in other it is far longer. A lot of the guesswork on megalania is based on the Komodo dragon.

There are chapters on its evolution and why and how it got so big, its relation ship to other monitors and the evolution of monitors, and the history of the discovery of its fossils.

Though Molnar believes that megalania is extinct he thinks that it might have lingered until relatively recently. He also entertains the possibility that the salvadori dragon of New Guinea may grow far larger than we think.

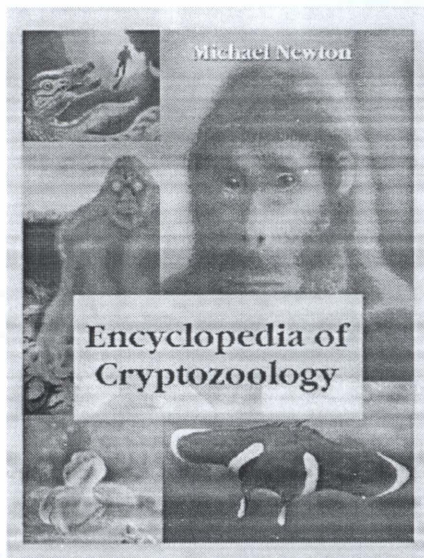
Incidentally, I think that a lager relative of the slender salvadori dragon might explain giant lizard sightings in the Antipodes rather than the bulky, bull necked megalania.

This is a great book for zoologists and paleontologists but the layman might find it a little heavy going.

Encyclopaedia of Cryptozoology: A global guide

Michael Newton
(McFARLAN & COMPANY
ISBN 0-7864-2036-7)

A book to rival Eberhart's jaw dropping *Mysterious Creatures*. This book is not so long (and is only one volume) but still runs to 576 pages with 2744 entries including 77 organizations and 112 people. Both the CFZ and yours truly are mention on several occasions! It's nice to be appreciated.



Newton's book is exhaustive. It includes some legendary beasts that the less open minded may find annoying. But we must remember that *legendary* does not mean *non-existent*.

The book differs from Eberhart's not only in listing notable cryptozoologists but it also individual creatures or cases. So whereas *Mysterious Creatures* had sea monsters and alien big cats as categorizes *Encyclopedia of Cryptozoology* has individual examples such as the *Beast of Exmoor* and the Tresco sea serpent.

If asked which was the better I could not say.

Both Eberhart and Newton should be on the Cryptozoologist's book shelf. They compliment each other very well. A great book.

WEB REVIEWS BY OLL LEWIS



Hello and welcome to the new website reviews section of *Animals & Men*.

The idea behind this section is to winkle out the best cryptozoology sites on the web from the slush that the

Internet dose it's best to hide them in and to tell you what's currently going at the Centre for Fortean Zoology website

(<http://www.cfz.org.uk>). If you know of a cryptozoological website that you'd like to see reviewed (good or bad) then please email the web address to crypto.connections@gmail.com. I can't promise I'll be able to review every website sent to me right away, or give a good review, but every website you send will help a lot and there are few better ways to publicise your website to fellow cryptozoologists than getting a mention in A&M.

Recently on the C.F.Z.'s own website there have been a few changes. With the return of Richard Freeman, Dr Chris Clark, Dave Churchill and Jon Hare from Mongolia a plethora of photos and videos have been uploaded for your viewing pleasure, including an interview with someone who has actually seen the Mongolian death worm, exploring a vast frozen river and footage of the boys from the CFZ battling against the forces of nature when a tornado hit their camp! Lesser men would surely have perished. It's been a bumper few months for updates as well as the Mongolia updates you can now listen to the Ogo-Pogo song, both in its original 1920's version and in a stunning new mix by Jon Downes and the Amphibians, not only that but the C.F.Z. is really spoiling you with some new and stunning creations by Mark North for your computer's wallpaper.

As if all that wasn't enough you can now buy a huge range of C.F.Z. products from the new

on offer are t-shirts, prints, clocks, bumper stickers, bags, posters, mugs, hats, bears, dog coats, aprons, calendars and a certain underwear range that quite frankly puts Anne Summers to shame. You can also now visit this year's Weird Weekend micro-site at

<http://www.cfz.org.uk/ww05.htm>.

British Big Cat Research Group:

<http://www.scottishbigcats.co.uk/index.htm>

In the world of Britain's alien big cats there are few organisations that really stand out as being professional and non-sensationalist. One such organisation is the British Big Cat Research Group, run by Mark Fraser. This website is quite simply one of the best places for anyone investigating A.B.C.'s to start, perhaps it's most notable resource being it's huge archive of A.B.C. reports going back as far as 1927.

Rating: *****

Loch Ness And Morar Project:

<http://www.lochnessproject.org>

Adrian Shine and the Loch Ness And Loch Morar Project are responsible, or have had a hand in a lot of the scientific research into loch ness and its environs, some of which is available to be downloaded or read on this website at:

<http://www.lochnessproject.org/lochnessproject/fieldcentre/fieldcentre.htm>. the reason I've given the address of the specific section of the website where this information is will become clear when you log onto the site from its front-page; It does contain a lot of information on Loch Ness and Loch Morar that you won't find anywhere else, but it is a little hard to navigate and find what you want as the sections aren't labelled very explicitly. The information within may be a little difficult to get your head round too if you are not scientifically minded in some cases - but if you are, or you persevere, you will be rewarded.

Rating: ****



THE SYCOPHANT



Deep in a cave beneath Loch Ness lives a strange figure who steals ideas from other magazines and then somehow makes them his own.

MONGOLOID

The following was deleted from Senor Freeman's account of the recent Mongolia thingy on grounds of taste. Your humble servant waited until the Editor's back was turned and salvaged it, believing that such

purple prose should not be left to languish in the recycle bin of Jon's computer.

Dave's laptop caused much interest as he had moving film with sound on it. The whole extended family crowded into the gur to see it. It was like a small, crowded, circular cinema. Many of the Mongolians (including Bilgee) had never seen the sea and were fascinated by Dave's film. Chief among these was a cute, pig tailed little girl of 4 or 5 whose name meant Starlight in Mongolian. She was so close to the screen she was almost on top of it. When her parents tried to take her to bed she snuck back out and came into our gur to watch more moving pictures. Time and again she was taken back only to sneak out once more. She seemed to be the avatar of loveable mischief.

Imagine our surprise and incredulity the next morning when Bilgee told us that Starlight was in fact a boy! Apparently all nomad children are raised as girls until they are 4 then the boys have their pigtails cut off in a ritual transition into manhood. We all thought he was joking until he grabbed Starlight and pulled "her" trousers down revealing what we scientist call a little whistle. It was a sort of junior, nomadic Crying Game moment.

So four grown men had spent a night in a gur with a pre-school ladyboy. I wonder what the tabloids would have made of that!

COMMERCIAL BREAK

It says a lot about the cryptozoological community in general (although I'm not exactly sure what), that during the lads' sojourn in Mongolia, their exploits were not the most eagerly-discussed item on the CFZ forum. Neither was the rediscovery of the Ivory Billed Woodpecker, the new series of *Dr Who* or even *Pink Floyd* reforming with Rog for *Live 8*.

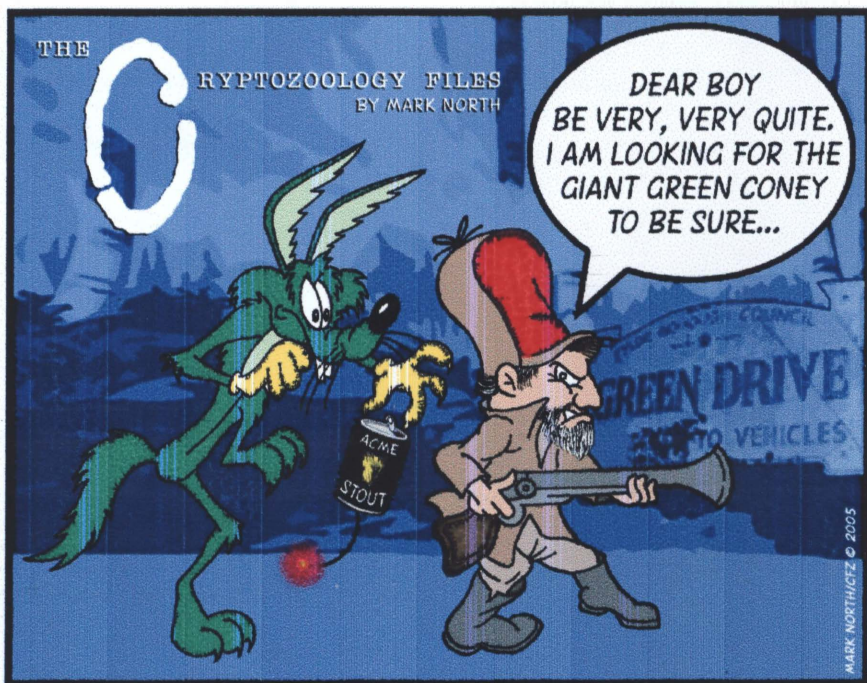
Nope. The most avidly discussed subject was the 'Richard Freeman



Undercrackers', an item of ladies underwear put up onto the CFZ Café Press shop as a joke! With a price of \$99 we are not surprised that no-one bought one. However we have sold several of the 'Graham Inglis Multipurpose Drinking Utensil', with the following description:

Lovingly crafted while we where drunk, this remarkable objet d'art celebrates the wit and wisdom of a man who likes nothing more than to swig tea and look out the window saying "oh did they?"

Funny old world innit?



LOCATION: GREEN DRIVE, LYTHAM ST. ANNES, LANCASHIRE.

CASE: THE BEAST OF GREEN DRIVE

ABOUT AS TALL AS A COLLIE DOG BUT WITH HUGE EARS, A LARGE MOUTH AND A LOLLING GAIT, THE PECULIAR ANIMAL HAS CAUSED A FRENZY OF CHATTER IN THE NORMALLY SEDATE LYTHAM ST. ANNE'S, ATTRACTING THE ATTENTION OF THE WIZARD OF THE WESTERN WORLD TO SOLVE THE CASE.

Typeset by The Chosen Men

"...over the hills and far away"

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